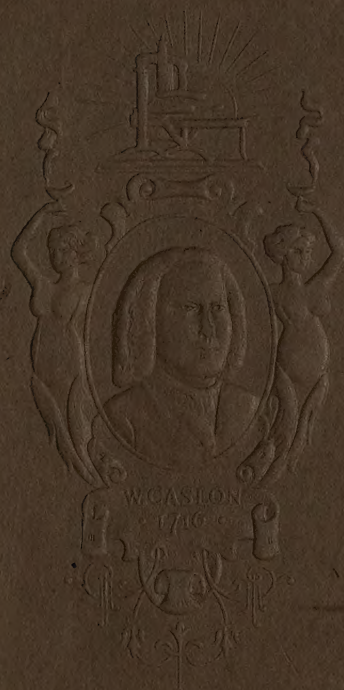
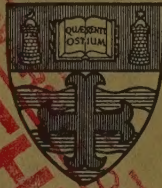


# Two Centuries of Typefounding





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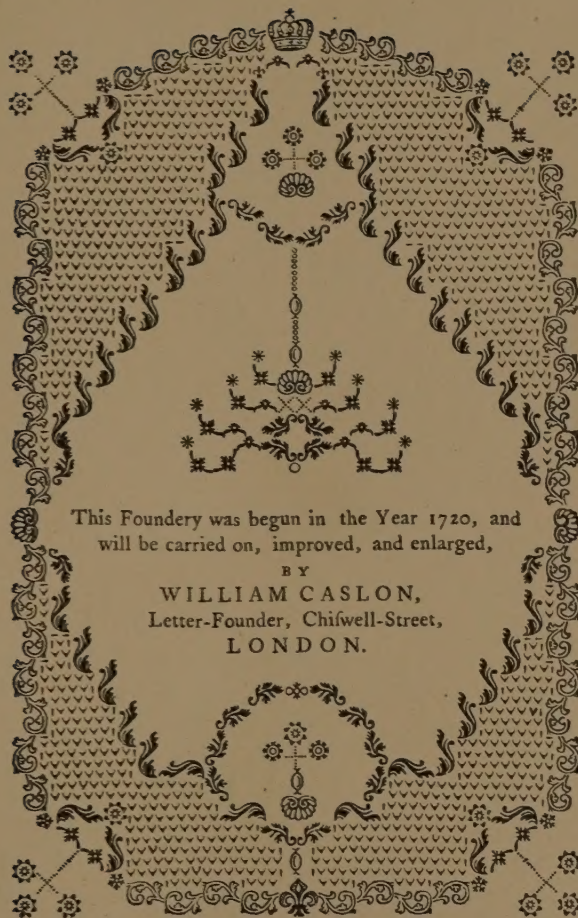


# Two Centuries of Typefounding









[Colophon from the 1785 Specimen Book.]

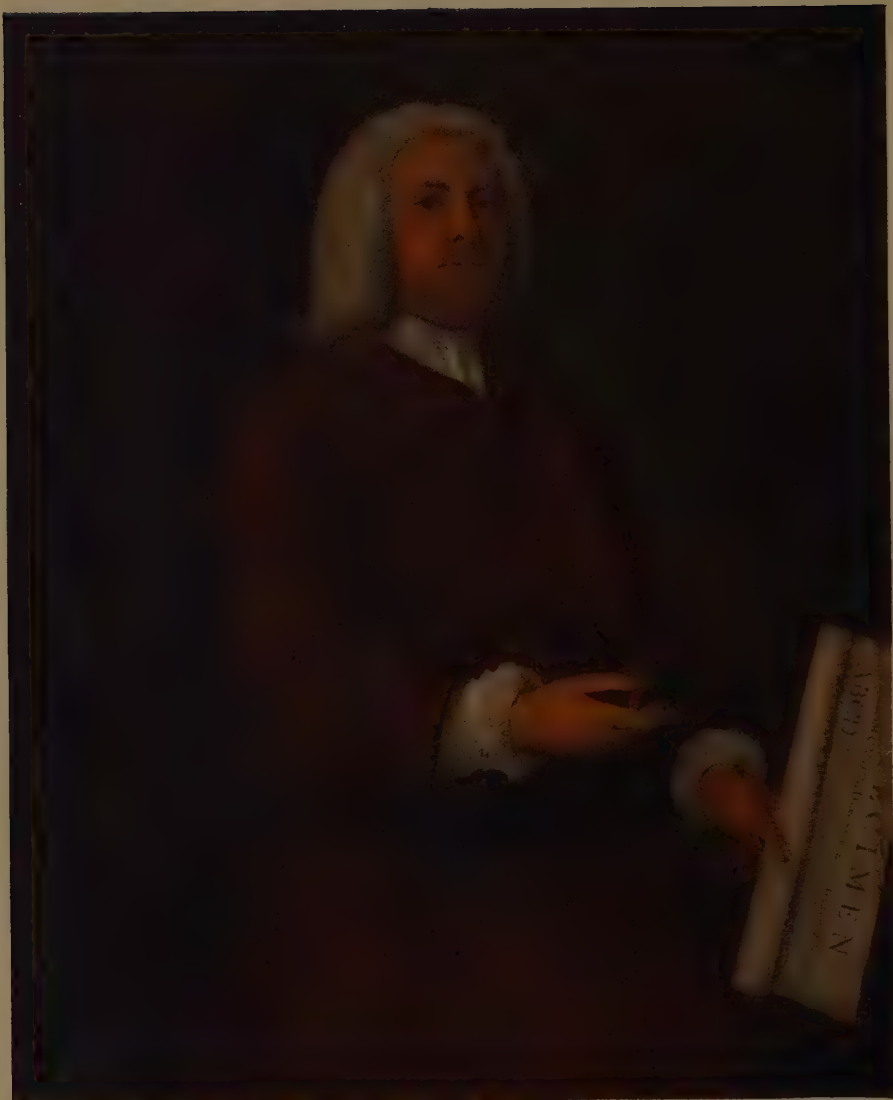












William Caslon I.

The First English Typefounder.  
Established The Caslon Letter-Foundry  
in Chiswell Street, London, 1720.  
Born 1692. Died 1766.

# Two Centuries of Typefounding

Annals of The Letter Foundry established by  
William Caslon in Chiswell Street,  
London, in the Year 1720.



London:

Printed by George W. Jones at The Sign of The Dolphin  
in Gough Square, Fleet Street.

1920.







To  
The First William Caslon  
and to Commemorate  
The Bicentenary of The Chiswell Street Foundry,  
which he began to establish in 1720,  
thereby not only creating for his Country a flourishing Industry  
in which she soon became pre-eminent  
but also, through his consummate Art in Type-Design,  
winning the highest Admiration  
of all Lovers of pure and beautiful Typography,  
this Record of  
Two Centuries of Typefounding  
is dedicated  
by his Successors in Art and Industry at the Foundry whose  
Foundations he so well and truly laid.





[From the 1785 Specimen Book.]



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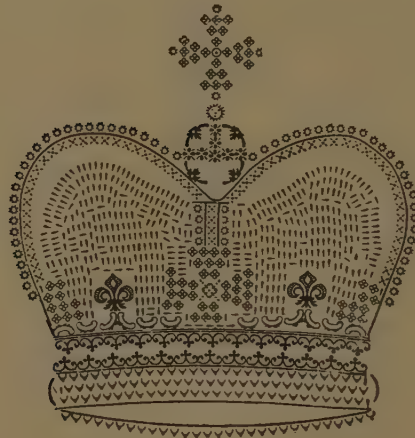
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[From the 1785 Specimen Book.]



## Chapter I.

### Introductory.

Title Defended and Explained—Date of the Caslon Commemoration—Preliminary Enquiries—Early Letter-Founding—Conjectures as to Earliest Methods—When Letter-Founding became a Separate Trade—The Plantin-Moretus Letter-Foundry.

 NO APOLOGY need be offered for the title of this book. Clearly the annals of a great English letter-foundry must coincide to a great extent with the general history of the art. Until William Caslon started his letter-foundry in 1720 the history of type-founding in England had hardly begun. He it was who marked the difference between scattered and stagnant pools and a steadily flowing "stream of tendency." Of that stream he was the fountain-head.

Considering that William Caslon was, in a sense, the author of the opening chapter of that history, and seeing how important a part the House of Caslon has played in subsequent developments, there is as little of presumption as of inaccuracy in adopting the comprehensive title here chosen, which is much more appropriate to our intention, if not to our achievement, in producing this souvenir, than would have been the title that first suggested itself, namely, "Bicentenary of the Caslon Letter-Foundry." In reality, the more general title is less aggressively immodest than the other, which rather conveys an impression that we wish to avoid—an impression that our chief aim is self-advertisement. It is not that; nor is it self-effacement.

For we dare assert, in all seriousness, that direct advertising is not by any means our present object, which is primarily to give as clear and as unbiassed an account as the Caslon archives, and other sources of information, will afford, of the most important period in the history of type



## Two Centuries of Typefounding

founding in England. Such data as have accumulated in our hands being intensely interesting to us, we naturally infer that the selection we have made from them may be valued for the light it may possibly shed on the history of type-founding, and incidentally on that of printing, the two subjects being at some points inseparable. At the same time, to obviate any possible misinterpretation of our title, we must at the outset disclaim any ambition to give a complete account of two centuries of type-founding in England. That were indeed a formidable task. Ours is the more modest one of placing at the disposal of some future historian the annals of the House of Caslon during the two hundred years 1720—1920.

As to the date of the present commemoration a word of explanation seems desirable. In the Caslon family there was a tradition, of which for some time free use was made with business intent, that William Caslon established his letter-foundry in 1716. That was probably the date at which he began to cut punches. There is no absolute certainty on that point; but that 1720 was the year in which he opened his letter-foundry, and that therefore 1920 is the right year in which to celebrate the bicentenary of that event, cannot be questioned. Further consideration of this point will be more fittingly given in later chapters, of which the career of William Caslon will be the main theme. (See Chapters IV, V and VI.)

In the meantime, if the foundations of the small votive temple we here purpose to raise to his honour are to be well and truly laid, we must delve a little below the surface. To get a clear understanding of what William Caslon did for the advancement of typography, and to give him due credit for the great improvements in type-design he effected, it is necessary to take a preliminary survey, however brief, of the conditions that preceded his advent, and especially of the circumstances that brought his genius to the rescue of punch-cutting when the art had reached the uttermost limit of degradation.

To go back as far as possible, as we are bound to do if we are to see the subject in true perspective, is to raise once more the vexed question: Who invented the art of printing from separate or movable metal types? For that elusive genius must have been also, directly or indirectly, the inventor of type-casting. Who it was, and whether Dutch or German, are details that never have been, and probably never will be, satisfactorily determined,

## Two Centuries of Typefounding

and we do not care to re-open the curiously acrimonious controversy that has raged around the question.

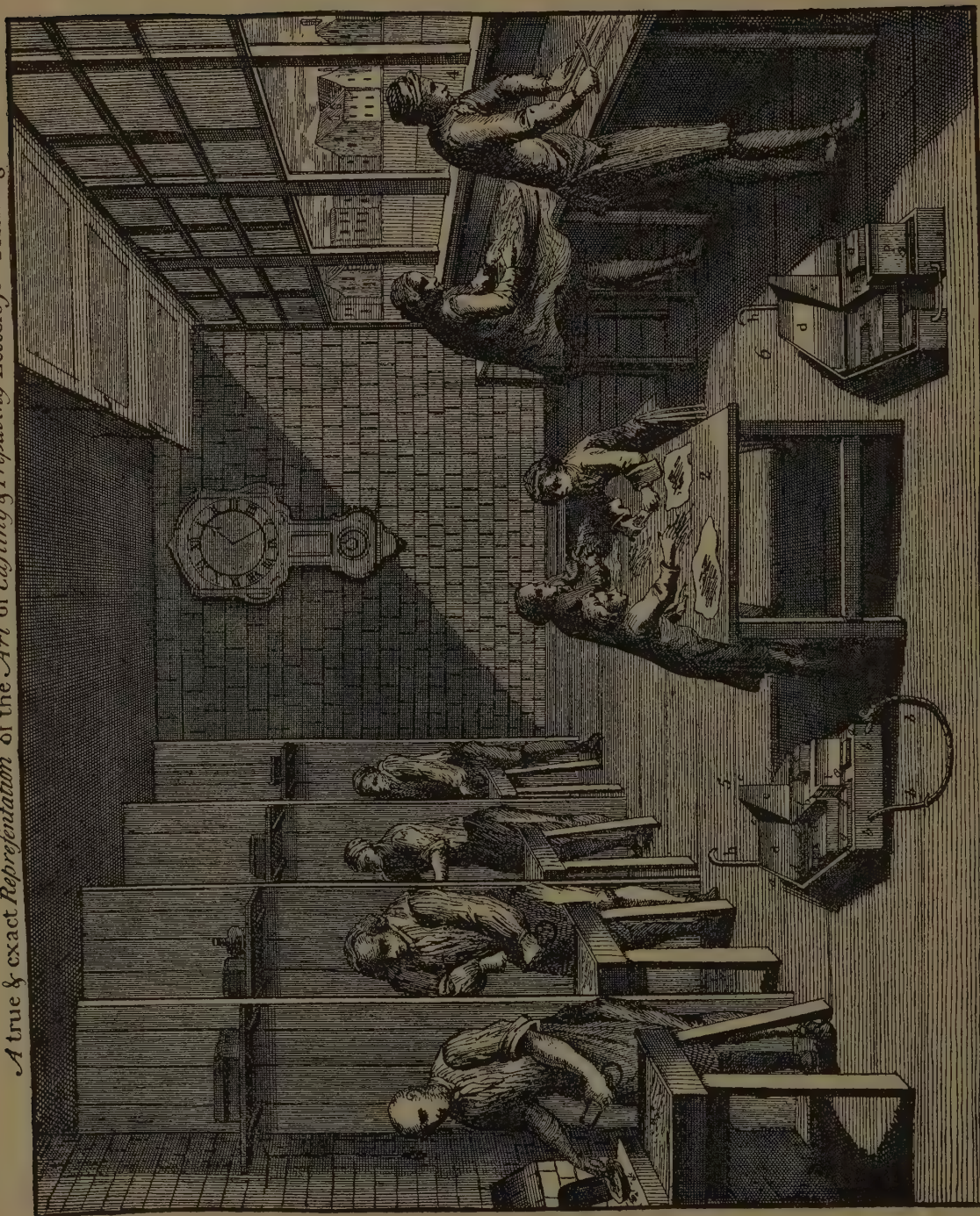
Not less barren of profitable result, but perhaps offering greater variety of interest, are certain questions of practical detail. Were the first movable types made of wood? It has been very confidently urged that they must have been—that to the printer using wood blocks it would naturally and almost inevitably occur that the tremendous labour of cutting fresh letters for every new job would be avoided if only he could use the old letters in new combinations. Forthwith he would ascertain what help the saw and the chisel could yield him. To this very natural supposition the objection has been raised that small wood letters could not be cut with sufficient accuracy to ensure a “true” or die-straight body, and that, anyhow, small wood letters must very soon warp and fray. It must be admitted, we think, that these objections are lacking in force. It is fairly apparent, however, that the bad alignment and generally unsatisfactory behaviour or misbehaviour of wood types would speedily and strongly suggest to the intelligent printer the desirability of superseding them with metal types; while to suffer acutely from shortness of sorts would be to cast about (the play upon words is purely accidental) for some means of multiplying them that would be quicker and easier than cutting them in the wood. Happy thought! Why not cast them in metal, and thus multiply them rapidly and almost indefinitely? Why not, indeed? The art of casting was well known in the fifteenth century, and the earliest printers from movable types must have been aware that, for instance, the silversmiths practised it. Fust, the partner of Gutenberg and Schoeffer, was a silversmith.

Just how the process of casting was at first adapted to letter-founding must be left to conjecture. Whether the matrices were produced in lead or in clay, and the casts taken in sand, or by what other process the types were made, cannot be known with certainty; nor is it possible to tell whether the wooden and metal letters, pierced through the body and strung together, which have been mentioned by certain writers as having been seen at Strasburg, Mentz, and Venice, were puncheons thus connected for preservation, or whether they were actual types, the string or wire on which they were threaded being the ante-locking-up means of keeping them together for printing. That types were thus held together for printing,



# Two Centuries of Typefounding

*A true & exact Representation of the Art of Casting & Preparing Letters for Printing.*



*Engraved for the Universal Magazine in 1750, from a drawing at the Kings Arms in St. Pauls Church Yard LONDON.*

Interior of the Caslon Letter-Foundry, 1750.  
The seated figure is that of Joseph Jackson (1733—1792).



## Two Centuries of Typefounding

Ottley infers from two striking features of the "Speculum," namely: (1) the extraordinary abundance of typographical errors, suggesting that the trouble of unstringing the lines prevented correction, and (2) the instance of a break line, comprising sixteen letters, turned completely "wrong way round," as nowadays sometimes happens to a linotype slug. Of course this turned line is not proof positive that its letters were strung together; for, as every practical printer knows, it is easy enough to insert an entire line of movable "wrong way round."

A further suggestion with respect to the earliest modes of making movable metal type is that the letter was cut on the metal body. Those may believe it who can. Yet another conjecture that is more ingenious than credible is that tin or lead moulds were taken from a forme of type in much the same way that stereotypers now make a flong, and that into this mould melted metal was run, rolled and pressed, the result being a series of letters in reverse, which could be easily separated and fixed on type-high wooden shanks to form individual types. Obviously these notions are mere flights of fancy, the actual data being so slight as to tempt imaginative persons to exercise their wits in building up highly speculative and exceedingly flimsy theories, of which it is unnecessary to say anything more than that their improbability is usually directly proportionate to their ingenuity.

It is a great relief to emerge from this morass of profitless speculation and get on to the firm ground of proved fact. There is evidence—produced by one Father Fineschi out of a cost-book of the Ripoli Press—that by 1480 steel, brass, copper, tin, lead and iron-wire were all used in the manufacture of types; and earlier entries in the same book (1477) show that type and matrices were already, at that early date, actually being bought. The letter-founder's trade, then, had begun—or, more strictly speaking, printers were trading as letter-founders—some score of years before the close of the century in which the art of printing from movable types was invented.

By an accident that is lucky for us, but was doubtless greatly deplored by the printers to whom it happened, the actual appearance of the types cast as early as 1476 has been depicted for us—the appearance, that is to say, not of the face only, but of the body also. Those very learned bibliophiles Mr. Madden and Mr. Henry Bradshaw discovered, in early printed

Two Centuries of Typefounding

A  
S P E C I M E N  
O F  
Printing Types,  
B Y  
W. Caslon and Son,  
*Letter Founders,*  
London.

Printed by J O H N T O W E R S,  
MDCCLXIV.

[Title Page of 1764 Specimen Book. The rule shews size of page and position of type.]

## Two Centuries of Typefounding

books, instances in which types pulled out by the ink-ball and lying flat on the page have been printed in profile, giving a clear view of the shank. These extremely interesting instances of self-portraiture show that the fifteenth-century types had no nicks; and there is no evidence of "jet-break." In no other respect save finish do they differ in appearance from the types of to-day.

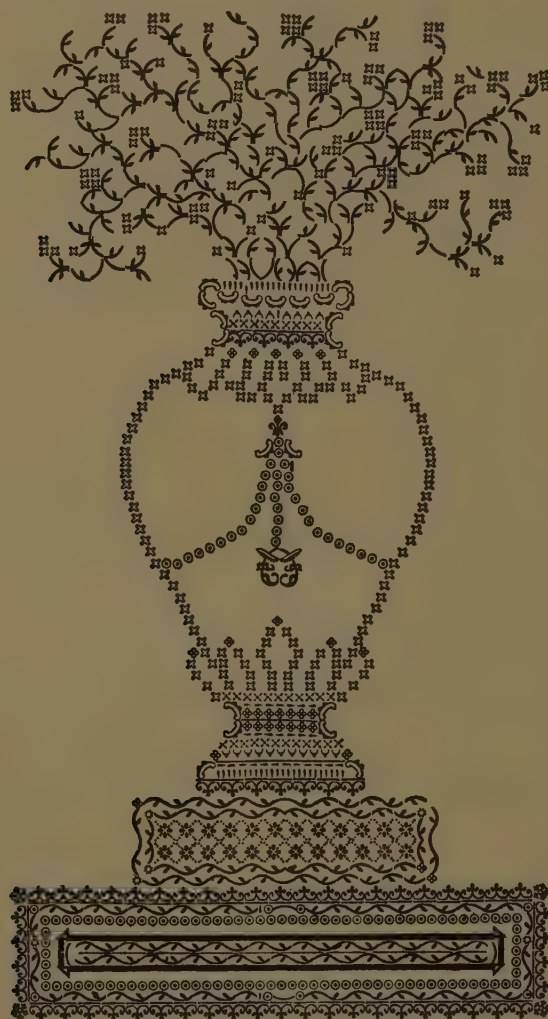
In his monumental work on "The Old English Letter-Foundries," to which the writer of this sketch must express his profound indebtedness, the late Mr. Talbot Baines Reed showed two most interesting engravings in which early type-founders are seen at work. One is from Jost Amman's "Stände und Handwerker" (Frankfort, 1568), and the other is from the Harleian MSS. In the Harleian picture the letter-founder is subsidiary to the printers. He sits in a small apartment next to their workroom. In the Amman picture also, the letter-founder occupies so small a room as to suggest a mere appanage to a printing-office: which, of course, is the relative position the letter-foundry naturally held at the outset. Small as the room is, however, it is very completely equipped. Furnace, moulds, crucibles, all appear in the picture, and, standing on a shelf, are some sieves, which to some minds suggest very strongly the use of sand as a casting medium, although other uses for them have been conjectured; for at the period when the Amman picture was made—late in the sixteenth century—typefounding had certainly got far beyond the primitive stage of casting in sand, clay, and plaster, from lead matrices made by forcing a wooden type into the metal while it was semi-plastic. By that date the steel punch and copper matrix must have been in general use.

For knowledge of the equipment of a sixteenth-century letter-foundry we are not wholly dependent on the evidence of pictures or other documents. There is a sixteenth-century printing-office, with letter-foundry duly appended, actually in being. The Plantin-Moretus Museum at Antwerp has preserved for us in its pristine state the printing-office which Christopher Plantin established in 1555, and anyone who cares can inspect there the foundry on which the famous printer depended for his type supplies. Its equipment tallies pretty closely with the first account (for which we are indebted to Moxon) of the type-founding processes in England in his day. In his "Mechanick Exercises, or the Doctrines of Handy-Works



## Two Centuries of Typefounding

applied to the Art of Printing” (London, 1683), Moxon describes in considerable detail the operations and appliances of letter-founding as he knew it, and, quoting Moxon’s list, Mr. Reed comments that “every one of these tools is to be found in the punch-cutter’s room of the present day [1887], scarcely changed in form or use from [those shown in] the woodcuts which illustrate Moxon’s description.”



[From the 1785 Specimen Book.]



## Chapter II.

### Rise of Letter-Founding in England.

Caxton, Wynkyn de Worde, Pynson, Faques, John Day—Rouen: The Early Headquarters of Letter-Founding—Star Chamber Decrees and their Effects on Letter-Founding—Importations from Holland—Type-Founding becomes a Separate Trade—Star Chamber Decree.



AXTON must have imported the bulk of his types, and probably some of his matrices came from abroad also; but Mr. Reed thinks it uncertain whether, of the six Caxton founts, that known to bibliographers as Type 3—the fount in which the famous “Rede Pale” advertisement was set—was brought from Bruges, or whether it is entitled to the distinction of being the first type wholly cut and cast in this country. Type 4, which Caxton used from 1480 to 1484, is believed to have been cut and cast in Westminster. An alternative supposition is that Caxton cast it from foreign-cut punches.

Wynkyn de Worde, a much better printer than Caxton, was apparently as proficient in type-founding as in typography, his black-letter being, in its way, as supremely beautiful as the famous Caslon Roman cut some two centuries later. De Worde was the first printer in England to use (1519) Greek types, which, however, forming but a word or two, were not cast in metal but were cut on wood. Another innovation of his was printing in Italics the marginal notes to Wakefield’s “Oratio,” of which the text was set in Roman. These Italics, and a few Arabic and Hebrew words cut on wood, make this book very noteworthy in the annals of printing in England. The date of the book is 1519. De Worde also printed the first music types ever used. In setting-up in business for himself in Fleet Street he initiated the career of that thoroughfare as a world-centre of Printing and Publication.

## Two Centuries of Typefounding



Mrs. William Caslon  
(Wife of William Caslon I).



## Two Centuries of Typefounding



Mrs. William Caslon  
(Wife of William Caslon I).

## Two Centuries of Typefounding

The Roman letter made its first appearance in England in 1518, when Richard Pynson produced Richard Pace's "Oratio in Pace Nuperrima."

William Faques, contemporary with de Worde, used some very beautiful founts of black letter, which probably he imported.

The incomparable John Day (b. 1522, d. 1584) was his own letter-founder, and cut the first fount of Saxon—a very fine face indeed. His Romans and Italics are also excellent performances, and it is noteworthy that he cut them to line or range together, Roman with Italic, an adjustment that previously had been generally if not totally neglected. John Day provided for their mixed use by giving them uniform alignment; while the Greek letter that he cut was equal to the best work that was being done by letter-founders on the Continent. He cut also some Hebrew characters on wood, and produced a number of ornaments in metal.

While it is supposed that Caxton, as early as 1480, was making use of punch, matrix, and adjustable mould, and while it is evident that several of his successors had, as we have seen, acquired considerable skill in the art of letter-founding, it is recorded that, nevertheless, during the period stretching from Caxton to Day, England was constantly importing type supplies from the

Double Pica Greek.

Π Ατερ ἡμῶν ὁ ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς· ἀγιασθήτω τὸ ὄνομά σου. Ελθέτω ἡ βασιλεία σου· ἡγηθήτω τὸ θέλημά σε, ὡς ἐν ἔρανώ, καὶ ἐπὶ τῇ γῆς. Τὸν ἄρτον ἡμῶν τὸ ἑπίσσιον δὸς ἡμῖν σήμερον. Καὶ ἄφες ἡμῖν τὰ ὀφειλήματα ἡμῶν, ὡς καὶ ἡμεῖς ἀφίεμεν τοῖς ὀφειλέταις ἡμῶν. Καὶ μὴ εἰσενέγκῃς ἡμᾶς εἰς πειρασμόν, ἀλλὰ ῥῦσαι ἡμᾶς ἀπὸ τοῦ πονηροῦ. ὅτι σὺ ἔστιν ἡ βασιλεία, καὶ ἡ δύναμις, καὶ ἡ δόξα εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας. ἀμήν. καὶ ὡς ἐκείνη ἀναπαύσῃς τοὺς ἁγίους σου.

Great Primer Greek.

Π Ατερ ἡμῶν ὁ ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς· ἀγιασθήτω τὸ ὄνομά σου. Ελθέτω ἡ βασιλεία σου· ἡγηθήτω δὲ θέλημά σε, ὡς ἐν ἔρανώ, καὶ ἐπὶ τῇ γῆς. Τὸν ἄρτον ἡμῶν τὸ ἑπίσσιον δὸς ἡμῖν σήμερον. Καὶ ἄφες ἡμῖν τὰ ὀφειλήματα ἡμῶν, ὡς καὶ ἡμεῖς ἀφίεμεν τοῖς ὀφειλέταις ἡμῶν. Καὶ μὴ εἰσενέγκῃς ἡμᾶς εἰς πειρασμόν, ἀλλὰ ῥῦσαι ἡμᾶς ἀπὸ τοῦ πονηροῦ. ὅτι σὺ ἔστιν ἡ βασιλεία, καὶ ἡ δύναμις, καὶ ἡ δόξα εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας. ἀμήν. καὶ ὡς ἐκείνη ἀναπαύσῃς τοὺς ἁγίους σου.

[From the 1764 Specimen Book.]

L

## Two Centuries of Typefounding

Continent; Rouen, at the beginning of the sixteenth century, being the headquarters of letter-founding. Mr. Reed conjectures, astutely, that in

Two Lines Great Primer Black.

**And be it further hereby enacted, That**

Double Pica Black.

**And be it further hereby enacted, That the Mayors, Bailiffs, or other head Officers,**

Great Primer Black.

**And be it further hereby enacted, That the Mayors, Bailiffs, or other head Officers of every Town and place corporate, and City wit-**

English Black.

**And be it further hereby enacted, That the Mayors, Bailiffs, or other head Officers of every Town and place corporate, and City within this Realm, being Justice or Justices of Peace, shall have the same authority by vertue of this Act, within the limits and precincts of their Ju-**

English Black. No 2.

**And be it further hereby enacted, That the Mayors, Bailiffs, or other head Officers of every Town and place corporate, and City within this Realm, being Justice or Justices of Peace, shall have the same authority, by vertue of this Act, within the limits and pre-**

[From the 1764 Specimen Book.]

P

in this lawless way, or whether it arose spontaneously as an early example of the sub-division of industries, is a detail of small importance beside the broad fact that towards the close of the sixteenth century the letter-foundry began to flourish as a separate institution, and thenceforward

England the first great impetus to the establishment of letter-founding as a separate trade resulted from the Star Chamber decree of 1586. This decree, which restricted the number of printing presses, gave authority to the Stationers' Company to destroy all plant found in illicit printing offices; the consequent wholesale destruction of printers' casting implements making it profitable to start unattached foundries. Printing was often done surreptitiously with types imported from abroad—at the date of the Star Chamber decree, Holland, in addition to Rouen, was already a source of supply—but obviously it was very convenient to the secret press to disencumber itself of letter-founding, if it could but obtain a supply of letter from an outside source, whether at home or abroad, but preferably at home as being much easier of access. Whether the unattached letter-foundry began



## Two Centuries of Typefounding

gradually ceased to be an appanage of the printing office; England thus rather tardily following a precedent that was already well established on the Continent, to the great benefit of both arts.

In France, type-founding was a recognised trade as early as 1539. But the first specific historical record of letter-founding as a distinct industry in England is contained in an entry in the Index to the Court Books of the Stationers' Company under date 1597: "Benjamin Sympson, letter-founder, to enter into a £40 bond not to cast any letters or characters, or to deliver them, without advertising the Master and Wardens in writing, with the names of the parties for whom they are intended." Of Sympson, unfortunately, nothing more seems to be known. Meteor-like he flashes across the historical horizon and as suddenly disappears. A more formal recognition of letter-founding as a separate industry is made in the famous or infamous decree of the Star Chamber which evoked from John Milton his noble assertion of the liberty of the Press, the immortal "Areopagitica." In this decree of the Star Chamber (which is dated July 11, 1637), section xxvii reads as follows:—"Item, The Court doth order and declare, that there shall be foure Founders of letters for printing allowed, and no more, and doth hereby nominate, allow, and admit these persons, whose names hereafter follow, to the number of foure, to be letter-founders for the time being, (viz.) John Grismand, Thomas Wright, Arthur Nichols, Alexander Fifield." Unauthorised persons acting as letter-founders could be punished as the Court saw fit. Here, then, we have indisputable proof that by 1637 letter-founding was a recognised trade in England, and one that there is strong reason to believe was distinct and separate from the trade of printing. If these letter-founders had been also printers, the fact would most likely have been mentioned in so formal and precise a document.



## Chapter III.

### The Age of Elegance.

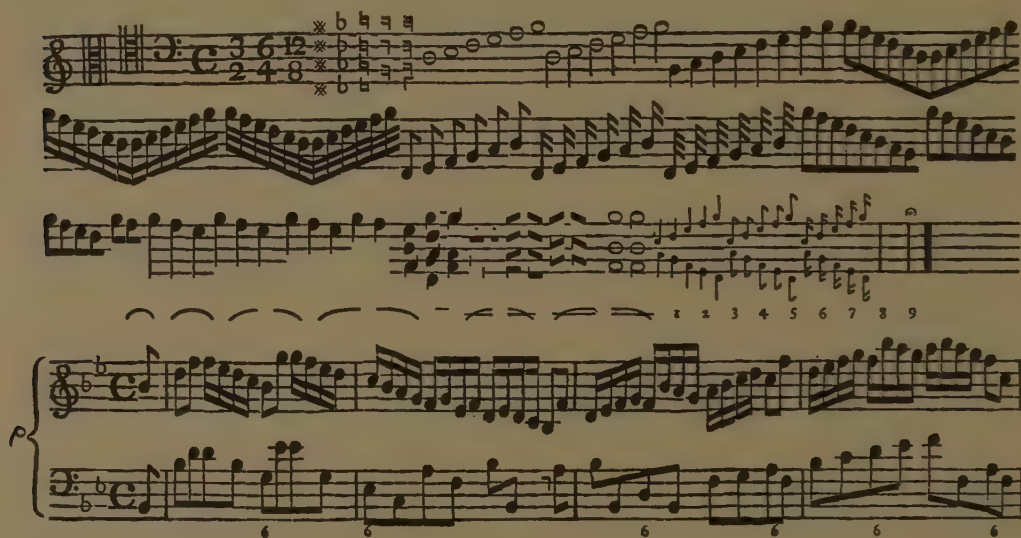
Rise of the Newspaper—The “Daily Courant”—Advent of “Great Anna”—Stamp Duty Started—Samuel Johnson and Benjamin Franklin—Circulating Libraries—Expansion of Literature—Genesis of “The Times”—Good Lettering the one thing needful in the Age of Elegance and of Exquisite Taste.



On a clear understanding of what William Caslon the First did for the improvement of typography, and in what circumstances he did it, a glimpse of the scene as it was set when he stepped on to the stage to play his ever memorable part is indispensable. Some of the several appellations of the eighteenth century fit it aptly enough, and help to explain how it was that William Caslon was inspired to devise such beautiful type faces, and why his superb art was admired as much in his day as it is in ours. Chief among these distinctive appellations are—“The Aristocratic Age,” “The Augustan Age of Literature,” and “The Age of Elegance and Taste.” It was the age of the Belle and the Beau, the Dandy and the Toast, the Autocrat of the Pump Room and the Bully of the Coffee-house; the brocaded gallant—a belated survival from the days of the Merry Monarch—ever ready for an intrigue or a duel; the Blood, the Mohock, and the Macaroni. Also it was the age of pugilism, cock-fighting, and dicing; of Dick Turpin, Jack Sheppard, and Jonathan Wild; of Fleet marriages, pamphleteers, Grub Street hacks who, having no use for principle, unblushingly sold their pens to the highest bidder. It saw the rise of a journalism that, considering the corruption of the age, was remarkably free from any exaggeration of the vices of Grub Street. It saw the daily newspaper definitely and firmly established as an inalienable adjunct to civilisation.

## Two Centuries of Typefounding

In 1702, the year in which Daniel Defoe, who has been dubiously accepted as the Father of Journalism, issued his bitter satire, "The Shortest Way with Dissenters," the first daily paper was published. This was the "Daily Courant." There had been, certainly, earlier attempts to found a daily journal, but they hardly establish a claim to priority. In 1695 "The



[From the 1764 Specimen Book.]

Post-boy," "The Post-man," and "The Flying Post" had brief and inglorious careers, and the claim for the first of them that it was the first daily newspaper is based on its appearance for four consecutive days, from a Wednesday to a Saturday.

Of the "Daily Courant," therefore, as being the parent of the daily paper, a brief account may be usefully given. James Grant, in his "History of the Newspaper Press," unkindly contemns the "Courant" as "a poor, miserable thing," printed on but one side, and rather smaller than a page of the "Saturday Review." It gave foreign news only, and plumed itself on abstaining from comment; the editor assuming, says Mr. Grant, with pawky humour, "that other people had sense enough to make reflections for themselves." The gentleman who acted on this extremely hazardous assumption was one E. Mallett, whose reflections—mostly gloomy, it is to be feared—seem to have occurred to him "next door to the King's



## Two Centuries of Typefounding

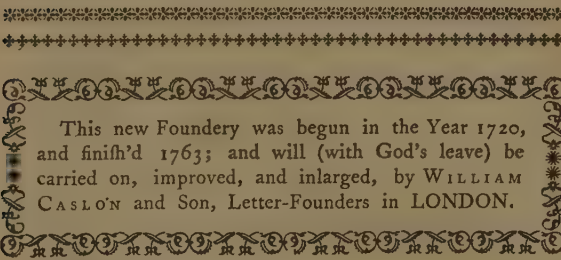
Arms Tavern at Fleet Bridge." A few months after its start, the "Daily Courant" was taken over, or revived, by a very enterprising printer and



Brevier Flowers.



Nonpareil Flowers.



[From the 1764 Specimen Book.]

reader's notice that the year in which the "Daily Courant" was started was that in which Queen Anne began to reign. The paper made its first appearance on March 11, 1702, three days after Anne's accession. It is the reign of "Great Anna" that has been more particularly specified as

bookseller, one James Buckley, who enlarged it to two pages, greatly improving its contents. Furthermore, he was aware that "sweet are the uses of advertisement," "thus discovering," Mr. Grant says, "the secret of success." This cannot mean that Buckley introduced the practice of publishing advertisements in newspapers, but only that he was much more successful in getting them than were his forerunners of the "Post-boy" and "Post-man." How racy are all these names, and the "Couriers" and the "Mercuries" as well, of the days that knew not railways or telegraphs, the news being conveyed by post-chaise along the highways at no small hazard of being intercepted by highwaymen. And, of course, the General Post Office, which was also a product of the eighteenth century, having been organised in 1711, gets its name in the same way.

It will not have escaped the

## Two Centuries of Typefounding



William Caslon II.  
Born 1720. Died 1778.

## Two Centuries of Typefounding



Elizabeth Caslon (*née* Cartlitch)  
(Wife of William Caslon II.)  
Born 1730. Died 1795.



## Two Centuries of Typefounding



William Caslon II.  
Born 1720. Died 1778. (See also *p.* 18.)

## Two Centuries of Typefounding

the "Augustan Age": for in it flourished Addison, Arbuthnot, Atterbury, Burnet, Congreve, Mrs. Centlivre, Defoe, Farquhar, Garth, Gay, Pope, Prior, Rowe, Allan Ramsay, Steele, Swift, Wollaston, Wycherley—certainly a constellation quite brilliant enough to justify the pretentious title. And the age of Anne was the age of the "Spectator," "Tatler," "Guardian," "Examiner," "Craftsman," and a host of minor adventures—Grub Street journals, coffee-house chronicles, scurrilous pamphlets of every degree of mendacity and immorality, some of them very justly burnt by the hangman. These provoked the Stamp Duty, which was imposed in 1712, when every newspaper had to bear a little red stamp, showing the rose, thistle, and shamrock, surmounted by the Imperial crown. Of this Stamp Duty (not abolished till 1855) the alleged object was not to collect revenue, but to check sedition! A similar duty that George III tried to impose on America was hugely provocative of most active sedition!

In 1709, the year in which Addison and Steele issued the "Tatler," thus really laying well and truly the foundation of the modern high-class part-literary, part-social, part-political periodicals, of which we now have a score or more of flourishing examples, Samuel Johnson was born. When (in 1737) Johnson and his pupil David Garrick trudged afoot from Lichfield to London, whither they arrived having between them a fortune of fourpence, they were come (as it turned out) as the pioneers of an epoch even greater than that of Anne; for in it flourished Gray, Boswell, Goldsmith, Junius, Chatterton, Burke, Blake, Burns, Sterne, Sheridan, Horace Walpole, Cowper, and many a lesser literary luminary, not forgetting Samuel Richardson, printer and novelist, and his pet aversion and relentless tease, Henry Fielding. It was at a printer's—Cave's, at St. John's Gate, Clerkenwell—that Garrick first exhibited his powers as an actor, Cave's workmen taking part in the rehearsal; and but for Cave, who employed Johnson (so the legend runs) to read proofs and do other odd jobs for "The Gentleman's Magazine," bleary-eyed Samuel must sadly have increased his tale of dinnerless days.

It is perhaps fortunate that Johnson and Benjamin Franklin did not meet, for the mere mention of America to Johnson always excited him to vehement wrath; and as Franklin was a sturdy antagonist, the pair would almost certainly have come to blows: and how lustily they would have laid

Two Centuries of Typefounding

A  
S P E C I M E N

O F

Printing Types,

B Y

William Caslon,

*Letter-Founder*

T O

His Majesty.

---

London:

PRINTED BY

GALABIN AND BAKER,

MDCCLXXXV.

[Title Page of 1785 Specimen Book.]



# Two Centuries of Typefounding



TO  
HIS MOST EXCELLENT  
MAJESTY  
GEORGE THE THIRD,  
KING OF GREAT-BRITAIN, FRANCE,  
AND IRELAND, &c. &c.

**This Specimen**

IS INSCRIBED,  
WITH ALL HUMILITY,

BY  
HIS MAJESTY'S  
MOST DUTIFUL  
AND DEVOTED SERVANT,

William Caflon.

## Two Centuries of Typefounding

on their cudgels ! Benjamin Franklin, however, had departed from London about a dozen years before Johnson arrived, and besides, Johnson, being afflicted with his fair share

of the class snobbery of his day, would hardly have deigned to argue with a journeyman printer; nor would he have cared to meet Franklin when, in 1764, the great American returned to London as a sort of ambassador. Franklin, arriving in London for the first time on Christmas Eve, 1724, immediately got work at Palmer's, then a famous printing house in Bartholomew's Close. It may afford some faint idea of how prices ran in those days to cite Ben's statement that for his lodgings in Little Britain he paid 3s. 6d. a week, and afterwards went elsewhere at an even lower rent. Next door to him in Little Britain was a dealer in second-hand books, from whom Franklin could, for a small fee, borrow any he wanted to read. As the hours of labour were then prodigiously long, he could only indulge this taste by curtailing his bed-time; but the important

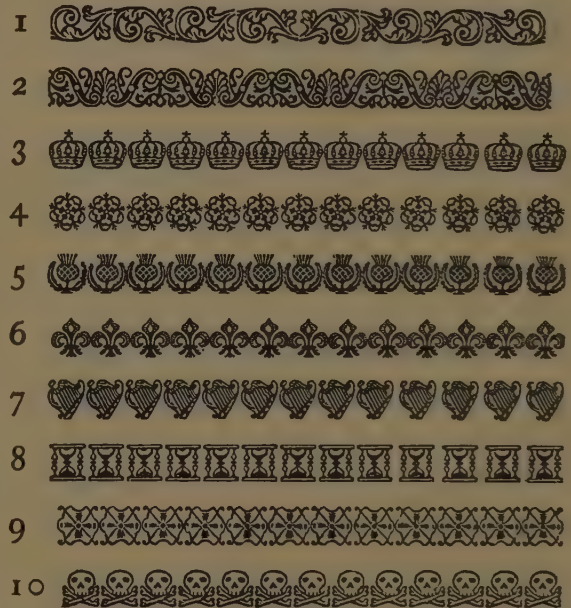
point is that in thus taking out books on loan he anticipated the circulating library system, which, destined to make in our day an enormous amount of work for the Press, and hence to have no inconsiderable influence on the art of letter-founding, was not established until 1740, a year in which, owing to severe and protracted frost, water was dearer than coals.

### FLOWERS.

#### Double Pica Flowers.



#### Great Primer Flowers.



[From the 1785 Specimen Book.]

## Two Centuries of Typefounding

It will be remembered that Franklin left Palmer's and went to Watts's, "a still larger printing house near Lincoln's Inn Fields," where he found



[Page of Headpieces from the 1785 Specimen Book.]

New Jersey. Of Palmer and Watts there will be something to relate, in due course, that is more immediately relevant to our annals.

Midway of the eighteenth century, Henry Fielding helped to keep the press busy by founding in succession several short-lived periodicals—"The Champion," "The True Patriot," "The Jacobite's Journal," and "The

that the other workmen, "near fifty in number," were "great guzzlers of beer." It was an Age of Guzzling as well as an Age of Elegance. Boards outside taverns invited the poor to go in and get intoxicated for a penny or dead-drunk for twopence; and it was the age of three-bottle men, who were highly esteemed if they were able "to carry their liquor like gentlemen." Great statesmen like Charles James Fox gave constant demonstrations of this delicate art. Even your Lady of Quality was allowed a little latitude in the art of getting genteelly tipsy on "Geneva water."

Franklin, the "Water Printer," had some slight claim to be considered a type designer; for on his return (1726) to America, where as yet there was no letter-founder, he not only cast a few sorts of which the office had run short, but actually cut several ornaments and checks for printing paper money for



## Two Centuries of Typefounding

Covent Garden Journal." In the intervals of this quick-change editing, he amused himself by writing such trifles as "Tom Jones," which, as the first and still the finest novel in the language, would of itself have conferred distinction on the century that produced it. In truth

*Double-Pica Script.*

*Sir,*

this was but an item among the many and tremendous claims the century can show to the proud title of "The Augustan Age of Letters," as it indubitably was also of letter-founding; the latter condition depending in great measure on the former. A few outstanding achievements will suffice to vindicate the claim for literature. It was in this wonderful mid-eighteenth century that

*Having now completed my new Specimen, I take the earliest Opportunity of sending you a Copy, which I hope will meet with your Approbation. I shall be happy to receive your future Orders, & you may be assured every possible Attention shall be paid to the Execution of those you may favour me with.*

Gray published his incomparable Elegy, Hume his History, Smollett his History and his translation of "Don Quixote," Blackstone his Commentaries, Johnson his Dictionary and his "Rambler." The Dictionary was compiled very near to the spot where these pages are being printed. In 1756 the "Literary Magazine"—a title significant

*I remain, respectfully,*

*Sir,*

*Your obedient*

*Humble Servant,*

*William Caslon.*

*London, 1785.*

enough of the trend of the times [From the 1785 Specimen Book.]

—was started, and Dr. Johnson was a frequent contributor to it. The "Literary Magazine" expired in July, 1758, and was immediately followed by the "Grand Magazine," a title that, like almost every other name of a periodical that we have mentioned as existing in the eighteenth century, has been revived in our own day. In 1785 was published "The Daily

## Two Centuries of Typefounding

Universal Register," which on January 1st, 1788, came out as the "Times." It was at this moment that serious journalism really began, although in 1920 journalists were celebrating their tercentenary.

As the Age of Elegance or the Age of Taste the eighteenth century has undoubted claims to pre-eminence; though towards its close there was decidedly a reaction towards dinginess, Goldsmith's plum-coloured coat exciting more remark than Johnson's dirty brown wig and drab worsted stockings. In their day dandyism was dying out; but in the middle period of that wonderful century William Caslon the First must have been very well acquainted with the beau who wore a rakish three-cornered hat, flowered satin breeches, a gay-coloured coat, lace ruffles, and shoes with obtrusive silver buckles, studied "the nice comportment of a clouded cane," could handle with exquisite grace his jewelled snuff-box, and was sedulously careful to cultivate a "mincing air." Thus, Horace Walpole (who, being an amateur printer using Caslon types, should have scorned such dandyism) "always entered a room in the style of affected delicacy which fashion had made almost natural—viz., chapeau bas between his hands as if he wished to compress it, or under his arm, knees bent, and feet on tiptoe, as if afraid of a wet floor." As for the Lady of Quality, she simply beggars description. Awakening disreputably late in the morning, she had chocolate brought to her bedside by a black boy, whom she had perhaps bought at an auction, and whom she would sell when she tired of him or was short of pin-money. While her hair was being dressed (and raised in a monstrous pile reaching some three or four feet above the top of her silly little head), and while the patches of black court plaister were being artistically disposed about her powdered face, she would receive callers of both sexes—Lady Bellamour and Sir Fopling Flutter, Lady Teazle and, as Jeames Yellowplush would say, the Lord Nozoo—who would vie with each other in regaling her ladyship with the latest tit-bits of scandal. This séance ended, she might "take the air abroad" either in a sedan chair or in a chariot, but she would not venture very far afield, for fear of the footpads, who would hold up in broad daylight anybody who seemed worth it. Or, if she did not care to fare forth, she would dispose herself languidly on a settee and toy with the current number of the "Spectator" or "Tatler," or with a novel by Fielding, Smollett, or Richardson—the last-named for choice, he being

## Two Centuries of Typefounding

much more of a ladies' man than the others, who lacked his sympathetic understanding of "the female heart," about which they were, in fact, rather cynically unpleasant.

The book, whether it were a novel or a sermon—and in that era the "eminent divines"—Atterbury, Sacheverell, Whitfield, Wesley—greatly exceeded the novelists in the supply of press-fodder—would in any case be neatly if not elegantly bound: otherwise the volume would have been unendurably out of harmony with its environment. For every detail (save one) of the lady's surroundings would be irreproachably elegant. She would recline in an elegant boudoir, designed and decorated by Robert Adam, or Kent, or Chambers, and furnished with the products of the exquisite craftsmanship of Chippendale, Sheraton, Hepplewhite. There would be a picture by Reynolds or Angelica Kauffman, a bust by Nollekens, a miniature by Cosway or Opie, finely carved chairs of walnut wood inlaid with marquetry and upholstered with pictured tapestry or delicate needlework. Clock-case and mirror-frame, bureau and cabinet, would be beautifully carved, inlaid, gilded, enamelled; every item and detail reached the summit of the art-craftsman's skill. Her books must be of like elegance. They were, indeed, as elegant as Roger Payne, the English Grolier, could make them. Bound in polished tree-calf, with a narrow gilt border exquisitely tooled to graceful pattern, the book was delightful to look upon, except for the poor lettering on its ribbed back, and the atrocious typography of the text. It was the wretched lettering on the back that most excited her disgust. Her scorn of it resulted in the revolution in typography that, after all, is one of the principal marks of distinction of the wonderful eighteenth century. That the inside of her beautifully bound books was printed in execrable type was much less a matter of concern to her ladyship than their external appearance. She wanted them to look beautiful from behind the diamond or heart-shaped panes of her Sheraton book-case, and the lettering on their backs was so inelegant as to wreck the æsthetic scheme. William Caslon the First, it would seem, was called in—when or by whom is not certainly known—to rectify this incongruity. What came of his cutting of elegant punches for bookbinders will be related in the next chapter.





## Chapter IV.

### Discovery of William Caslon.

Elegant Binding and Bad Lettering—When Writing-Masters Flourished—Tonson, Bowyer, and Watts—"The First English Type-Founder who Deserves the Name"—Jacob's Ladder to Immortality—Some Suspected Legends and an Imaginary Conversation.



O whom first occurred the happy inspiration to ask a certain clever young engraver of gun-stocks and gun-barrels to try his hand at cutting brass stamps for bookbinders' lettering is not on the records; nor is it a matter of moment. Neither is it quite certain who or what first induced Caslon to cut type-punches. But whereas, in the matter of the bookbinders' tools, we are almost without a clue, the choice of legends concerning the type-punches is rather embarrassing, not to say confusing. In the preceding chapter it has been assumed that our hypothetical Lady of Quality complained to her Lord that the lettering on the backs of her handsomely bound books lacked elegance and distinction. Whether her taste favoured "Roderick Random" or Hervey's "Meditations among the Tombs," "Pamela" or "Drelincourt on Death," she would be equally concerned for the "choice" or "chaste" embellishment of the book; and if the lettering on the crimson or royal blue label between the ribs on the back was ill-formed and irregular, as it frequently was, she would be ready to weep tears of vexation—if she thought them becoming to her; otherwise, and especially if her favourite authors happened to be Sterne, Fielding, or Smollett, she might stamp her pretty foot and swear lustily, as the mode then was with your Lady of Quality.

It was not only that ugly lettering within and without did not consort well with beautiful binding. Tasteless lettering was put to shame by the

## Two Centuries of Typefounding



Thomas Caslon.  
Born 1727. Died 1783.

## Two Centuries of Typefounding

beautiful Italian hand affected in the inscriptions to the fine mezzotints which, as they had newly come into vogue, her ladyship would be sure to possess in plenty. We are not saying at what particular part of the wonderful century our Lady of Quality flourished, and we are not forgetting that its last day was about a hundred years removed from its first and that many changes occurred in the interval. It is convenient to assume for her an uncommon longevity and an unusual breadth of experience, so that she may serve to illustrate the more fully the salient characteristics not merely of her day but of her period. If we are allowed this much latitude, we can attribute to her the proud possession of a set of examples of the newly introduced art of mezzotint engraving. These probably included John Simon's famous portraits of celebrities of the time (and of all time)—Pope and Prior, Addison and Steele—as well as Faber's masterly prints of Peg Woffington and Flora Macdonald. On some at least of these engravings the inscriptions were done in an exquisitely delicate Italian hand. These maintained the high standard of lettering established in the day of Peter Bales, who, flourishing (in more senses than one) in the sixteenth century, and having been possibly the most accomplished penman that ever lived, had left behind him a magnificent tradition of beautiful handwriting which survived all through the eighteenth century. Our Lady of Quality, and her lord also, may have taken lessons from one of the numerous tribe of writing-masters (with Edward Cocker, the arithmetician, at their head) whom it was then the fashion to employ.

This cult of the writing-master would naturally set up a feeling for form in lettering, and this feeling would react in profound disgust at the shapes that fell far short of these exemplars. The standard had become very high indeed in England, and the types designed in Holland being much below it, the fashionable world and those who ministered to its wants and whims in this field were alert in the search for something better. William Caslon's kingdom awaited him. Through what agency he was discovered is merely a matter of conjecture, and this hiatus in the history of letter-founding is regrettable in so far as it deprives us of the pleasure it would be to do justice to the memory of the person of taste and discernment who first saw on a gun-stock or a gun-barrel the potentialities of a bookbinder's punch-cutter of superlative merit. It may possibly have been the king of booksellers,



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## SPECIMEN OF PRINTING TYPES,

BY

*Henry* CASLON & CATHIERWOOD,  
Letter-Founders,  
CHISWELL STREET,  
LONDON.



T. BENSLEY, PRINTER,  
BOLT COURT, FLEET STREET, LONDON.

[Title Page of the 1808 Specimen Book.]

## Two Centuries of Typefounding

**The Caslon Letter-Foundry, Chiswell Street, London.**

*HENRY CASLON respectfully informs his Friends and the Printers in general, that the Term of his Partnership with the Executors of the late Mr. Nathaniel Catherwood having expired, he has entered into a new engagement with Mr. John James Catherwood, brother to his late Partner, and that the Foundry is now carried on under the Firm of Henry Caslon and J. J. Catherwood. He embraces this opportunity of expressing his grateful sense of the distinguished patronage the Foundry has received, and the kind encouragement he has individually experienced from his Friends in the Printing Business since the deaths of his Mother and late Partner. He hopes by a prompt and accurate execution of orders, and an unceasing attention to Typographical Improvement, to merit a continuance of their favour, and to maintain the ancient reputation of the Foundry.*

*Jan. 19, 1814.*

## Two Centuries of Typefounding

Jacob Tonson, but there is no positive evidence that it was he and none other who made the discovery that, at the next step, was to lead to the regeneration—one had almost said the birth—of British letter-founding. There is the pleasing possibility, but it is no more than that, of Tonson's having stood for the third leg of the tripod, of which the other members are the elder William Bowyer and John Watts, with both of whom—they being printers and he a publisher—Tonson was closely associated in business affairs. Watts, indeed, went into partnership with Jacob Tonson II.

If it be assumed that Jacob Tonson I was the original discoverer of the genius of William Caslon, the difficulty, presently to be noticed, of assuming that John Watts and William Bowyer came upon William Caslon simultaneously and independently is swept aside. Tonson would certainly tell Watts, and Watts, requiring Bowyer's aid in financing the new foundry, naturally told Bowyer of Tonson's find. Is not this supposition more inherently probable than the somewhat jejune statement that Bowyer and Watts (anticipating the simultaneousness of Adams and Le Verrier in discovering the planet Neptune, or that, at a still later date, of Wallace and Darwin in discerning the fundamental principle of evolution) had simultaneously and independently perceived that in William Caslon a bright particular star had swum into their ken?

Without presuming to rank letter-founding with astronomy and biology, which in effect would be to align a minor art with great sciences, we may be permitted to lay some small stress on the importance of discovering the right man for the great work of redeeming typography from the baseness into which it had sunk, not only in this country but throughout Europe. To substitute strength for feebleness, beauty for ugliness, is never a slight matter, even when the instance is solitary. To multiply it indefinitely, as copies of printed matter are multiplied, and thus to impart from one generation to another the delicate and peculiar pleasure that handsome types can give, is to confer no small benefit on mankind. And this is what William Caslon has done; for the Roman face that he designed has been everywhere acclaimed as the finest thing of its kind—a model that for two hundred years has never been excelled for strength, legibility, grace, charm.

This achievement is the more remarkable since, as the late Mr. William Blades has noted, William Caslon, "the first English typefounder who de-



## Two Centuries of Typefounding

served the name," was twenty-eight years of age before he saw a printing-type, yet "soon made his name famous throughout Europe for the beauty of his founts." Carried away by his generous enthusiasm, Mr. Blades made two slight errors in chronology. He wrote (or perhaps he was the victim of a misprint) that Caslon was born in 1682, the correct date, being, of course, 1692; and, calculating from the right date, he assumes that Caslon had never seen a printing-type until 1720. It is evident that the second of these statements corrects the first, seeing that  $1682 + 28 = 1710$ ; and while it is indeed very likely that in 1710 William Caslon had "never seen a printing-type," as Mr. Blades rhetorically puts it, yet it is equally certain that by 1720 the sight was no novelty to him.

Of the trio of worthies whom we have assumed to be jointly concerned in the discovery of William Caslon, or rather, in the diversion of his talent to the service of letter-founding, it will be useful to recall a few biographical particulars. Jacob Tonson the Elder, who was born in 1656 and died in 1736 enormously wealthy, is accounted by Timperley as "the most celebrated bookseller that his country ever produced." Pope said of him, "Little Jacob creates poets as kings do knights"; Wycherley answering Pope with "You will make Jacob's ladder raise you to immortality." Notwithstanding Dryden's quarrel with him about money matters, "little Jacob" seems to have been a just man and a genial, and one likes to think that it was by "Jacob's ladder" that young Caslon climbed to immortality—not as a poet, but as the designer of a fitting vehicle for the daintiest poetry or the most stately prose.

William Bowyer the Elder is one of the most notable figures in the history of typography. Born in London in 1663, he was apprenticed in 1679 to Miles Flesher. Having served his time, Bowyer began business on his own account in Little Britain, whence he moved to Dogwell Court, Whitefriars. He was one of the twenty printers allowed by the Court of Star Chamber. So highly was he esteemed by his contemporaries that when (in 1712) his office in Dogwell Court was burnt down, all his household effects being destroyed, and all his founts of type running in a molten stream into the gutters, the sum of £2,539 odd was subscribed towards his reinstatement. His son, also named William (b. 1699, d. 1777) was still more eminent. Timperley (who always praises in superlatives)

## Two Centuries of Typefounding



Henry Caslon III.  
Born [?]. Died 1788.

## Two Centuries of Typefounding

describing him as "the most learned and distinguished printer of modern times." There was not much exaggeration in this, for the younger Bowyer was a graduate of Cambridge, became printer to both Houses of Parliament, and, dying rich, established the Bowyer Charities, which to this day are administered by the Stationers' Company.

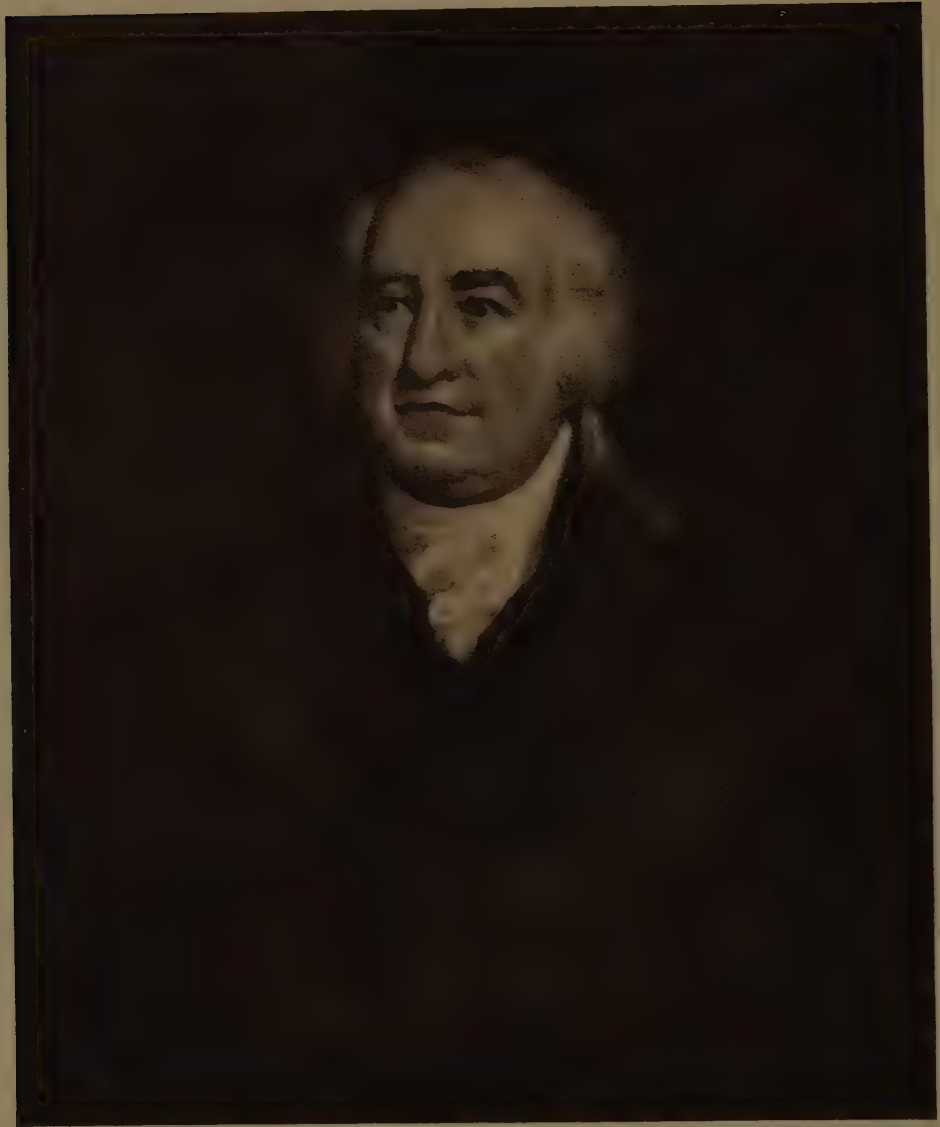
John Watts is identical with the printer in Lincoln's Inn Fields for whom Benjamin Franklin worked as a journeyman on his first visit to England. Watts, who died in 1763, at the age of eighty-five, was, as we have already remarked, closely associated with the Tonsons.

The received accounts of the introduction of William Caslon to the art and craft of punch-cutting for letter-founding have rather a legendary look. As we have already said, Bowyer the Elder and John Watts have been bracketed equal for the honour. Of Watts it is said that having been struck by the accuracy and neatness of some bookbinding punches, he conjectured that the designer of them was "capable of remedying the defects of the existing foundries." These punches had been cut by William Caslon, whom, so the legend runneth, Watts induced to start a new letter-foundry, undertaking to supply him with funds and to introduce him to the leading typographers of the day. Taken by itself, this account, bald as it is, may pass muster on its plausibility; but Timperley rather confuses the issue by adding a further narrative to much the same effect. "The elder Bowyer," Timperley says, without the slightest attempt to explain the remarkable coincidence or to allay the reader's suspicions about it, "also accidentally saw, in the shop of Mr. Daniel Browne, bookseller, near Temple Bar, the lettering of a book uncommonly neat, and inquiring who the artist was by whom the letters were made," was introduced to William Caslon.

Both stories may be perfectly true in substance and in fact, and though the one does not corroborate the other, it is equally true that there is no necessary contradiction between them. It is even quite credible that Bowyer and Watts both conceived the same brilliant idea at the same moment of time, and that, in their hurry to bring it to fruition before anyone else should get in ahead of them, they collided, panting, on Caslon's doorstep in Vine Street. But is it not far more probable that, both being printers of high standing, and evidently very friendly rivals (as master printers, beyond all other traders, nearly always are), Bowyer and Watts frequently met and



## Two Centuries of Typefounding



William Caslon III.  
Born 1754. Died 1833.

## Two Centuries of Typefounding

talked shop, and that, both being enthusiastic lovers of their craft, much of their talk would naturally turn on the decadence of British printing, which, then as now, was of course entirely owing to the astounding want of enterprise of those confounded type-founders !

Cannot you hear one of them saying to the other as they lunched together at the "Cheshire Cheese," or as they clinked wine-glasses at the "Cock Tavern" : "Yes, I quite agree that type gets worse and worse. We

And be it further he  
reby enacted, That  
the Mayors, Bailiff  
A B C D E F G H I K

[Four-line Pica Black, Open. From the 1808 Specimen Book.]

haven't a decent founder in London. James is every whit as bad as Grover used to be. What sort of types do we get ? All imported from the Low Countries, and then only the offscourings of the Dutch foundries. Remember little Jacob Tonson's visit to Holland ? He wanted the very best type, and offered to pay handsomely for it, but they tried to fob him off with some more of the inferior stuff of which he had got heartily sick. He was very insistent, in spite of the Dutchmen's repeated refusals to part with any founts or matrices that were worth having, but I doubt whether he succeeded in bringing away anything better than Dutchy's second-best. English printing might be the finest in the world, not suffering in comparison with the work of old Aldus himself, could we but get someone to cut punches. But, egad, sir ! English printing must needs go to the dogs for want of a man who can design an honest English face."

## Two Centuries of Typefounding

Thus the rather choleric John Watts. The milder-tempered William Bowyer, having followed Watts's example of emptying the glass to wash down these unpalatable truths, observed, "John, let us recharge our glasses and go into this matter a little resolutely. Your talk of little Jacob reminds me of a remark of his of which I am only at this present moment beginning to suspect the importance. You know how earnest he is in seeking unceasingly after perfection in the embellishment of his books. Well, t'other day the good little man came bustling into my house, his wig all awry, his breath all gone, and he had scarce crossed my threshold ere he shouted, 'By

# ENGRAVING AMBASSADORS

[Canon Shaded and Two-Line Pica Shaded. From the 1808 Specimen Book.]

George, I have found it, William—I have indeed, sir.' 'Found what, sir?' quoth I—'the philosopher's stone, that shall turn your leaden types into gold?' 'Nothing so foolish, sir, I vow, but the perfect letter for a book-back. What is more, I have engaged the good-will of the man who cut it.' "

"Well," said Watts, after a tense pause, "I have no need to ask what is the thought that has only just struck you. If it hasn't just struck me also, I'm a Dutch letter-founder. This it is, I think—that the man who can cut bookbinders' punches to please the fastidious taste of little Jacob can cut a type-face that will please even a fastidious printer like you. Egad, sir, we *have* found the philosopher's stone—we *shall* turn our type-metal to gold! Who is this prodigy who will help us to do it, and where does he abide?"

"Why, sir, he is a young man that engraves gunstocks and hath his shop in Vine Street, by the Minories. His name, I think, is Caxton—no, no, of course it cannot be that. Aha! I have it. It is Caslon, a name I do not remember to have encountered before."

"To him, old lad," cries Watts, "anon we will put him to the proof."

In some such way, we take leave to imagine, was William Caslon enlisted in the service of Typography.





## Chapter V.

### The Chiswell Street Foundry.

William Caslon the First and William Bowyer the Elder—Caslon set up in Business by Bowyer, Bettenham, and Watts—Cuts a Fount of Arabic—His Name in Pica Roman—"Brilliant Regeneration of English Typography"—Caslon's Selden—His First Specimen Sheet—Enter William Caslon the Second—The Caslon Concerts—Death and Character of William Caslon the First.



ONCERNING the earliest years of William Caslon the First history is silent. That he was born in 1692 at Cradley, Halesowen, Shropshire, is nearly all that is known of his origin, and the date of his apprenticeship to an engraver has not been ascertained. If we suppose him to have been bound at the customary age of fourteen, the date would obviously be 1706 or thereabout. What, for our purpose, would be an even more interesting date to record is that of his beginning to practise the art of letter-founding; we are denied, however, even this small measure of certainty, and it is even in doubt, as we have seen in the preceding chapter, who it was that first discerned in him the potentialities of a punch-cutter of exceptional skill—nay, let us out with the unquestionable, fascinating fact that he was a punch-cutter of superlative genius, whose compeer has neither preceded nor followed him. Exactly how, when, and where this momentous discovery was made is, as we have already said, a matter of mere surmise. Probably the date was anterior to 1720, and it is pleasing to assume that the astute discoverer was that eminent printer William Bowyer the Elder. If so, it may be that he drew his bow at a venture, but most certainly he hit the mark.

To assume that Bowyer deserves this credit is merely to follow the lead of John Nichols, who, in his "Anecdotes of William Bowyer," seems to

## Two Centuries of Typefounding

infer that it was Bowyer who was the first and principal agent in persuading Caslon to take up the art and craft of the letter-founder. Bowyer it was, according to Nichols, who took young Caslon on a visit of inspection to James's foundry in Bartholomew Close, with the object of initiating the young gun-lock engraver into the art and mystery of letter-founding; and, again, Bowyer it was who lent Caslon £200, and induced James Bettenham (who had married Bowyer's step-daughter) to risk the like amount on what was really a hazardous speculation. Watts also had "a little flutter," adding a modest £100, so that the borrowed capital with which William Caslon the First entered on the daring enterprise of letter-founding was just £500—a sum, however, that was worth at least three times as much as a like amount in the currency of to-day. In the eighteenth century £500 was, in Shylock's phrase, "a good round sum." With it, William Caslon set up as a letter-founder "in a garret in Helmet Row, Old Street."

It is assumed that all this happened during the year 1720. A tradition persistent in the Caslon family that 1716 was the actual date of Caslon's start lacks confirmation, but is certainly not destitute of some appearance of probability. At all events it was in 1720 that Caslon received his first important commission. In that

### DOUBLE PICA, No. 1.

**Quousque tandem abutere,  
Catilina, patientia nostra?  
quamdiu nos etiam furor iste  
tuus eludet? quem ad finem  
sese effrenata jactabit auda-  
cia? nihilne te nocturnum  
præsidium palatii, nihil urbis  
vigiliæ, nihil timor populi, &  
ABCDEFGHIJKLMN**

**ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTU**

**£ 1234567890**

**Quousque tandem abutere,  
Catilina, patientia nostra?  
quamdiu nos etiam furor iste  
tuus eludet? quem ad finem  
sese effrenata jactabit auda-  
cia? nihilne te nocturnum  
præsidium palatii, nihil urbis  
ABCDEFGHIJKLMN**

**VANWAYMAN**

[From the 1808 Specimen Book.]

## Two Centuries of Typefounding

year the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge (which, having been established in the year 1698, was then in the heyday of vigorous and

### DOUBLE PICA, No. 2.

Quousque tandem abutere,  
Catilina, patientia nostra?  
quamdiu nos etiam furor iste  
tuus eludet? quem ad finem  
sese effrenata jactabit audacia?  
nihilne te nocturnum præsidi-  
um palatii, nihil urbis vigiliæ,  
nihil timor populi, nihil con-

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOP

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNQRSTU

VWXYZÆ £ 1234567890

*Quousque tandem abutere, Cati-  
lina, patientia nostra? quamdiu  
nos etiam furor iste tuus eludet?  
quem ad finem sese effrenata jac-  
tabit audacia? nihilne te noctur-  
num præsidium palatii, nihil ur-  
bis vigiliæ, nihil timor populi,*

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNO

PQRSTUVWXYZÆ

[From the 1808 Specimen Book.]

hand, the Society would hardly have been likely to entrust an entire novice with the commission to cut a new one. They would have required proofs of his competency for the task. True, they may have been depending trustfully on the expert opinion of eminent judges—Bowyer, Watts, Tonson—but,

enthusiastic youth) determined to print a Psalter and a New Testament in Arabic, and young Caslon was asked to cut the type for them. How he acquired the reputation that led to his selection for this delicate and important work, and how long it had taken him to establish that reputation, are questions that leap up spontaneously, but to which, alas, there is no certain answer; yet it is less easy to believe that the difficult task of cutting a fount of Arabic was set the young and green letter-founder in the year of his start in business than that the 1716 tradition has a solid foundation of fact.

Further, there is to be taken into account the statement by Rowe Mores that the Society, when it asked Caslon to cut and cast a fount of Arabic, was already in possession of a fount of that character which had come from Grover's foundry. There is no need to labour the point that, with this Grover fount in



## Two Centuries of Typefounding

even so, they certainly would have demanded the further guarantee of work already accomplished. Surely such credentials are far more likely to have been the product of several years, rather than months or weeks, of successful experiment. All things considered it is evident that the tradition assigning to 1716 the honour of being the starting-point of the career of Caslon as the regenerator (or, as some would have it, "the only true begetter") of English letter-founding is not to be lightly dismissed as sheer fable, although certainly no substantial proof exists that it is solid fact.

Five years elapsed before the completion of the Psalter in which Caslon's Arabic fount was used (1725), and it was not until two years later (1727) that the Arabic New Testament was printed. Hereupon comes the most momentous incident in the history of English letter-founding. It wears a legendary air, but its truth can neither be established nor disproved. Whether it be fact or fiction—or a mingled yarn

intertwining both—it is indispensable to our narrative, since it is indissolubly associated with the annals of letter-founding, of which, for aught known to the contrary, it may be a quite authentic unit. "Mr. Caslon," says John Nichols, "after he had finished his Arabic fount, cut the letters

### GREAT PRIMER.

*Quousque tandem abutere, Catilina, patientia nostra? quamdiu nos etiam furor iste tuus eludet? quem ad finem sese effrenata jactabit audacia? nihilne te nocturnum præsidium palatii, nihil urbis vigiliæ, nihil timor populi, nihil consensus bonorum omnium, nihil hic munitissimus habendi senatus locus, nihil horum ora vultusque moverunt? patere tua consilia non sentis? constrictam jam omnium horum conscientia teneri conjurationem wxyz&*  
**ABCDEFGHIJKLMNQRSTU**

**ABCDEFGHIJKLMNQRSTUvwxyzÆ**

**£ 1234567890**

*Quousque tandem abutere, Catilina, patientia nostra? quamdiu nos etiam furor iste tuus eludet? quem ad finem sese effrenata jactabit audacia? nihilne te nocturnum præsidium palatii, nihil urbis vigiliæ nihil timor populi, nihil consensus bonorum omnium, nihil hic munitissimus habendi senatus locus, nihil*  
**ABCDEFGHIJKLMNPOQ2RST**  
**UVWXYZÆ&**

[From the 1808 Specimen Book.]



## Two Centuries of Typefounding

of his own name in Pica Roman and placed them at the bottom of a specimen of the Arabic, and Mr. Palmer (the reputed author of Psalmanazar's 'History of Printing') seeing this name, advised Mr. Caslon to complete the fount of Pica. Mr. Caslon did so: and as the performance exceeded the letter of the other founders of the time, Mr. Palmer—whose circum-



[Borders from the 1808 Specimen Book.]

stances required credit with those who, by his advice, were now obstructed [i.e., whose business was likely to suffer from this new rival], repented having given the advice, and discouraged Mr. Caslon from any further progress. Then Mr. Caslon, disgusted, applied to his patron Mr. Bowyer, under whose inspection he cut, in 1722, the beautiful fount of English (Roman) which was used in printing the edition of Selden's works in 1726." T. F. Dibdin, who wrote entertainingly on bibliography, expresses the very pious hope that Caslon had rewarded "that wretched pilferer and driveller

## Two Centuries of Typefounding



William Caslon III.

Born 1754. Died 1833. (See also *p.* 38.)

## Two Centuries of Typefounding

Samuel Palmer” with “half-a-dozen canings for his dishonesty.” But William Caslon was too tender-hearted a man to do anything of the kind.

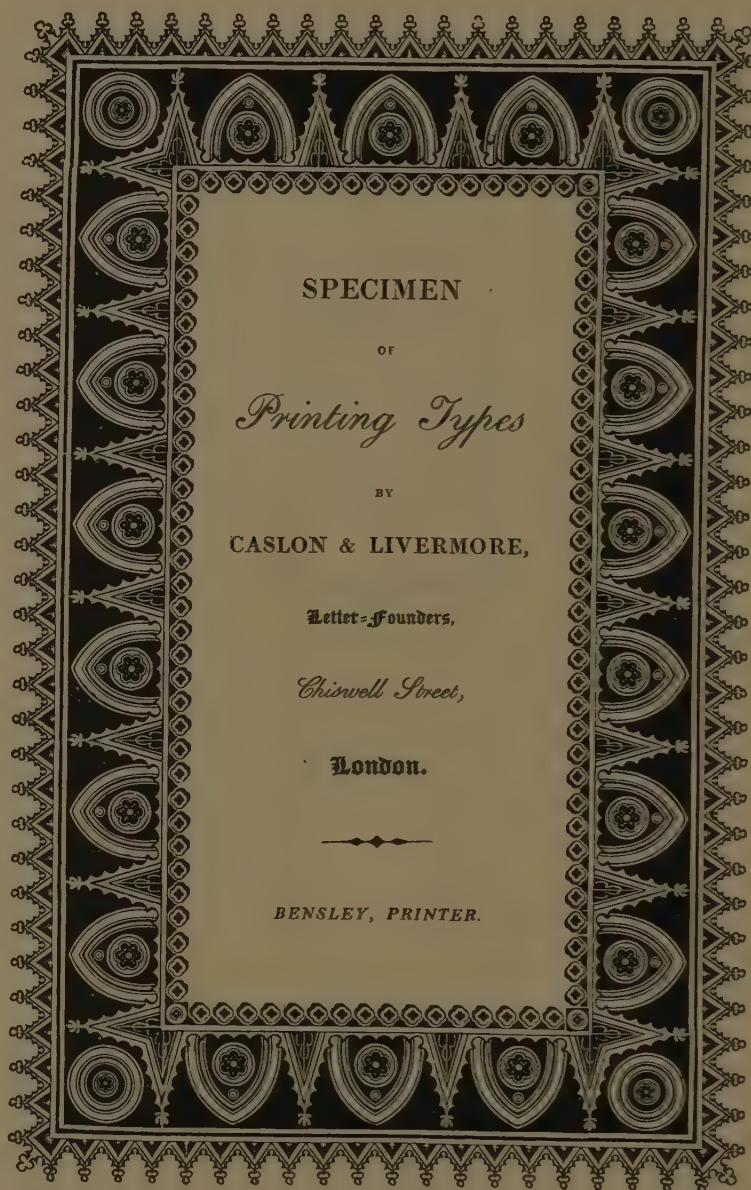
It will be noticed that the dates, while they do not involve any inherent improbability, are nevertheless perplexing when collated. This will appear more clearly in a brief restatement. In 1720 William Caslon started as a letter-founder. In the same year this raw beginner was commissioned to cut so delicate and difficult a character as Arabic. In 1725 and 1727 this fount was in use. In 1722 Caslon had produced the beautiful fount of English Roman used in the “Selden” of 1726, and Mr. Reed says (see below) that this fount of English was the first letter that was cast at the Caslon Foundry: but how does this claim of priority for the fount of English square with Mr. Reed’s further statement that Caslon had cut a fount of Pica Roman and Italic in 1720? These dates are confusing, not to say contradictory; but it is impossible to trace with certainty the true sequence of events, upon which, moreover, there would seem to turn no issue of sufficient importance to reward laborious research.

That Caslon tried his prentice hand on Arabic is just as unlikely as that he was commissioned to cut punches for it in the very year in which he started in business; but so the story goes, and, failing a more credible account, it must be provisionally, if dubiously, accepted. So long as the narrative is true in substance and in fact, it is no great matter if the dates seem a bit muddled; for, after all, the important point to note is that which cannot be better expressed than in the words of Mr. T. B. Reed. Speaking of the 1726 Selden he says: “Caslon’s excellent performance of this task may best be judged of by an inspection of this noble work, which remains conspicuous not only as the impression of the first letter cast at the Caslon Foundry, but as marking a distinct turning-point in the career of English typography, which from that time forward entered on a course of brilliant regeneration.” That is the important fact to grasp.

For this same edition of Selden Caslon cut also the Hebrew characters casually included in it. His other noteworthy early achievements were: An excellent fount of Pica Coptic for Dr. Wilkins’s edition of the Pentateuch; a Pica Black which followed closely the traditional Old English character first used by Wynkyn de Worde; founts of Armenian, Gothic, Etruscan, Ethiopic. These, except the Etruscan and the Ethiopic, are all shown in



# Two Centuries of Typefounding



[Title Page of the 1832 Specimen Book.]

## Two Centuries of Typefounding

the famous and now very rare First Specimen Sheet which, in 1734, Caslon sent out from Chiswell Street, whither he had transferred his foundry from Ironmonger Row, where his tenure had been very brief after his removal from Helmet Row. The sheet is arranged in four columns, and displays thirty-eight founts, as shown in the fac-simile facing p. 5.

### Advertisement.

*The PRINTERS are respectfully informed, that, in addition to the contents of the following Modern Specimen, this Foundry includes the Works of the justly celebrated WILLIAM CASLON, by whom it was originally established. They consist of all sizes of Roman and Italic, of an improved Elzevir shape; an extensive collection of Greeks, Hebrews, Saxons, and Blacks; Arabic, Armenian, Coptic, Ethiopic, Gothic, Persian, Samaritan, Syriac, Script, Music, &c. several of which are not to be found in any other British Letter-Foundry. Specimens of the original Caslon Foundry may be seen in Chiswell Street; but, being nearly out of print, cannot be generally circulated.*

[From the 1832 Specimen Book.]

restricted his own exquisite output, to the great disadvantage of English typography. Caslon's disappointment proved fortunate for posterity.

Four years after the initial appearance of Caslon's First Specimen Sheet, Ephraim Chambers, F.R.S., greatly extended its influence as a pioneer missionary of good lettering. In the year 1738 Chambers published a new edition of his "Cyclopædia, or an Universal Dictionary of the Arts and Sciences," of which the first issue had appeared in 1728. In the 1738 edition of this work, which was the first of its kind in this country, and formed the basis on which the more famous "Rees" was subsequently

Of these founts the Canon Roman came from the foundry of Andrews (formerly Moxon's), while the English Syriac was cast from matrices that came from the Paris Polyglot Foundry, and the Pica Samaritan was cut by a Dutchman named Dummers, who worked for a while in England. With the exception of these three all the types shown in the Specimen Sheet of 1734 were cut by Caslon himself, and one cannot help agreeing with Mr. T. B. Reed that it was indeed a fortunate accident which thwarted William Caslon's attempt to purchase the Grovers' foundry; for obviously the acquirement of a large stock of old matrices would have re-

## Two Centuries of Typefounding

built, Chambers inserted Caslon's First Specimen Sheet to face the article "Letter," and appended the comment that "The above were all cast in the foundry [*sic*] of Mr. W. Caslon, a person who, though not bred to the art of letter-founding, has, by dint of genius, arrived at an excellency in it unknown hitherto in England, and which even surpasses anything of the

**A B C D E F G H I J L**  
**M N O P Q R S T U V**  
**£ 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 0**

**A B C D E F G H I J M**  
**N O P Q R S T U V W**  
**X Y Z Æ Œ & , ; : ? ! - '**

[Two-line Great Primer and Two-line English Antique Open from the 1832 Specimen Book.]

kind done in Holland or elsewhere." Seldom has contemporary eulogy survived so triumphantly the test of well-nigh two hundred years. Caslon's contemporaries, indeed, were fully alive to his merit, and praised him most generously. Ames ("Typographical Antiquities") wrote in 1749: "The art seems to be carried to its greatest perfection by Mr. William Caslon and his son." The anonymous author of a short essay on "The Original, Use, and Excellency of Printing" (1752), particularly mentions "Mr. William Caslon and his Son, Letter Founders in Chiswell Street, who have very much by their indefatigable labours promoted the honour of this Art, and who have lately printed three broadsheet specimens" of types that "for their master strokes and curious flourishes outdo all that have been cast in England, Holland, or any other place before." Smith, in his "Printer's



## Two Centuries of Typefounding

Grammar," repeatedly eulogises the founder by whose genius "letter is now in England of such a beautiful cut and shape as it never was before." Rowe

### GREAT PRIMER.

Can be cast on Two-Line Minion.

**Fortunate adventurers  
displaying in magnifi-  
cent mansions and fine  
equipages the wealth  
ABCDEFGHIJKLMN O P  
£ 12345678900 £**

### ENGLISH

Can be cast on Pica or Small Pica.

**Fortunate adventurers display-  
ing in magnificent mansions and  
splendid equipages the riches ac-  
quired by successful speculations  
in the State Lottery excite emu-  
ABCDEFGHIJKLMN O P Q R S T U  
£ 12345678900 £**

### LONG PRIMER, No. 2.

Can be cast on Bourgeois, Brevier, or Minion.

**Fortunate adventurers displaying in magnificent  
mansions and splendid equipages the riches ac-  
quired by successful speculations in the State  
Lottery excite emulation in the spectators who  
gaze and sigh for the gifts of the blind Goddess  
which she never confers but on the bold, enter-  
ABCDEFGHIJKLMN O P Q R S T U V W X Y Z  
£ 12345678900 £**

### TWO-LINE NONPAREIL.

**ABCDEFGHIJKLMN O P Q  
£ 1234567890**

[From the 1832 Specimen Book.]

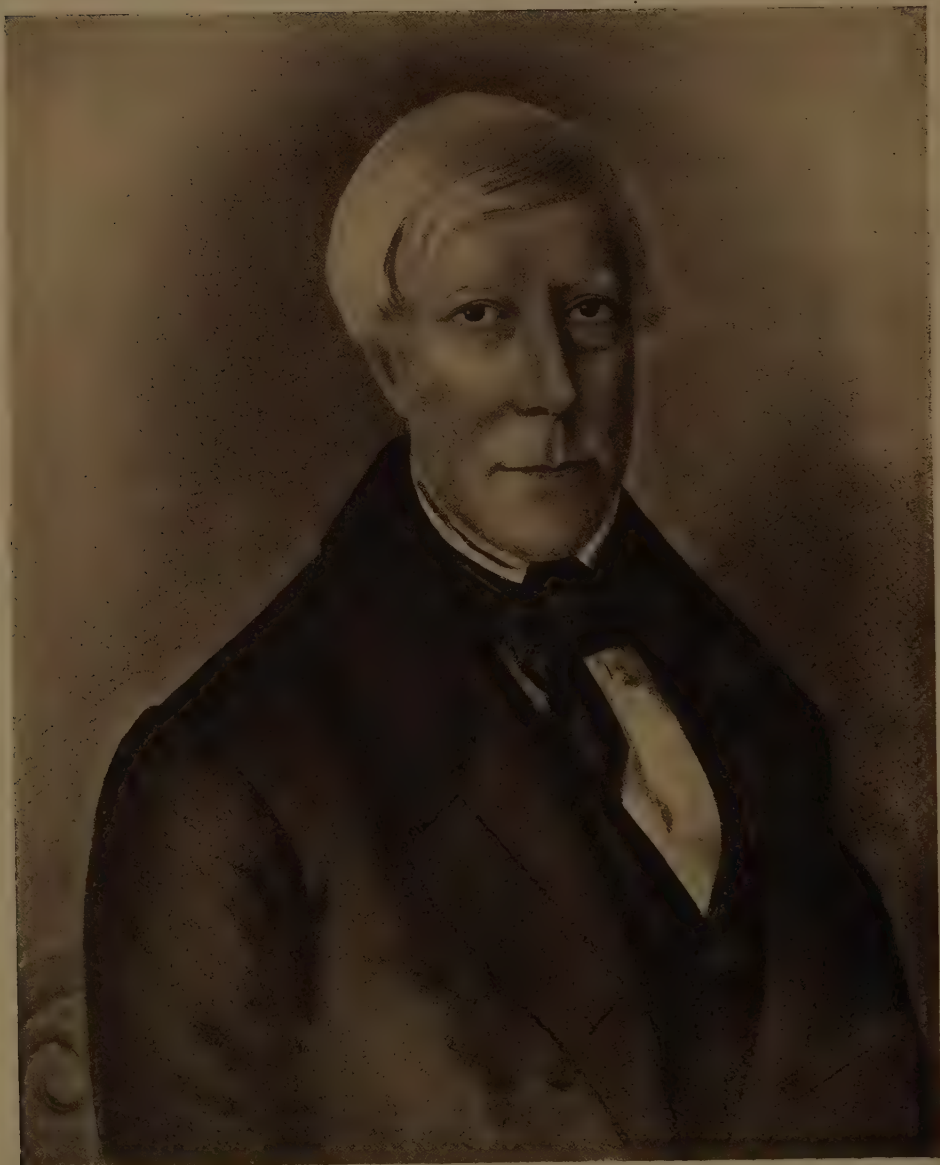
Black of the following sizes: Great Primer, English, Pica, Small Pica, Long Primer, Brevier; the music matrices and the flower matrices. James's share comprised several founts of Roman and Italic, and founts of algebra and cancelled figures, with some Long Primer almanac matrices.

Mores, soaring into regions of mythology, called Caslon the "Coryphæus of modern letter-founders"; Coryphæus, it may be explained for the benefit of the youngest apprentice, being the leader of the chorus in Greek drama. Baskerville wrote (pre-face to "Paradise Lost," 1758): "Mr. Caslon is an artist to whom the Republic of Learning has great obligations: his ingenuity has left a fairer copy for my emulation than any other master"—high praise indeed from a rival who was also a super-egotist!

In July, 1739, Caslon joined John James in purchasing the foundry of Robert Mitchell, Caslon choosing—according to Rowe Mores—a Pica Greek; full-face capitals of the follow-  
ing sizes: 4-line Pica, 2-line Great Primer, 2-line English, and 2-line Pica, besides Great Primer, English, Long Primer, Brevier and Nonpareil Roman and Italic: founts of English



## Two Centuries of Typefounding



Henry Caslon IV.  
Born 1786. Died 1850.

## Two Centuries of Typefounding

In the Caslon Specimen issued in 1742, the name of William Caslon the Second appears. He, the eldest son of William the First, had entered the business in this same year 1742 and in the twenty-second year of his age. His ability as a designer of types soon became manifest. Later, in the Specimen of 1748, he "appeared to great advantage in the specimen of types of the learned languages," and in the Specimen issued in 1749 many of the founts were of his handiwork. Ames gives him high praise, saying: "The art seems to be carried to its highest perfection by Mr. William Caslon, and his son, who, besides the type of all manner of living languages now by him, has offered to perform the same for the dead that can be recovered, to the satisfaction of any gentleman desirous of the same." William the Second died in 1778. But there is yet a little more to say of William the First.

William the First had by 1750 so firmly established his reputation as a "citizen of credit and renown," that George the Second made him a Justice of the Peace for Middlesex, an honour our founder upheld with dignity to the day of his death. He died at Bethnal Green on January 23rd, 1766, aged seventy-four, and was buried in the churchyard of St. Luke's, Old Street, in which parish all his three successive foundries were situated. He had indeed lived a full life. "Honours, riches, marriage blessing," were his to the full. As artist and as man of business he was equally successful. He seems to have been happy and fortunate in all the relations of life. As may be inferred from his adventures with Bowyer and Watts, and from the many glowing contemporary references to him as man and artist, he had a genius for making friends as well as for designing type-faces. He was thrice married, the ladies being (1) Miss Sarah Pearman, (2) Miss Longman, and (3) Miss Elizabeth Warter. By his first wife he had three children: two sons and a daughter. William joined him in the business at Chiswell Street. Thomas became an eminent bookseller in Stationers' Hall Court, in 1782 was made Master of the Stationers' Company, and died the next year, 1783. The daughter, Mary, was twice married—first to Mr. Shewell, one of the original partners in Whitbread's brewery; and afterwards to Mr. Hanbey, a wealthy ironmonger. She left £300 in trust with the Ironmongers' Company, who were to expend the interest in keeping her father's monument in repair, the balance, if any, to be given to the poor.

## Two Centuries of Typefounding

A portrait in oils, which holds the chief place of honour in the little gallery that has been formed and preserved by the late Mr. Thomas Smith and his sons and successors, shows William Caslon the First as a man of candid, cheerful, sensible, and altogether winning countenance, in which

**BRISTOL**  
**CHESTERFIELD,**  
**£ 1234567890.**

[Five-line Pica and Two-line Great Primer Italian. From the 1832 Specimen Book.]

shrewdness, ability, and authority, are pleasantly mingled with suggestion of a jovial outlook on life and a fondness for enjoying its good things in moderation. It is the face of a man who was habitually genial and kindly, but who on due occasion could be as firm as a rock (see Frontispiece). An eminently sociable man, he retired from the business as soon as he possessed indubitable proofs that it would continue to prosper in the hands of his son, and for the remainder of his days he enjoyed “ease with dignity.”

Doubtless he was an authentic amateur of the arts, and decidedly he was not to be classed with “the man that hath no music in himself, nor is not mov’d with concord of sweet sounds.” Who shall say that his soul-harmony was not the fount whence up-welled the delightful harmonies of form that distinguish beyond all others the lovely types he made? At all events, such was his love of music that he became quite famous for the chamber concerts that he held, long before his retirement—in fact, he began them in Ironmonger Row, shortly after he had started in business as a letter-founder. “To these concerts,” says Sir John Hawkins, in his “History of Music,” “he used to invite his friends, and those of his old acquaintance, the companions of his youth. He afterwards removed to a



# CASLON & LIVERMORE'S

DESIGNS FOR ORNAMENTAL

IRONWORK, AND FOR THE DECORATION OF

No. 1.



No. 2.



No. 3.



No. 4.



No. 5.



No. 6.



No. 7.



No. 8.



No. 9.



No. 10.



No. 11.





## Two Centuries of Typefounding

large house in Chiswell Street, and had an organ in his concert room. After that, he had stated monthly concerts, which, for the convenience of his friends, and that they might walk home in safety when the performance was over, were on that Thursday in the month which was nearest the

**Quousque tandem abut  
ere, Catilina, patientia,  
ABCDEFGHIJKLM  
£ 1234567890**

***Quousque tandem abu  
tere, patientia nostra?  
ABCDEFGHIJKLM  
V.A.N.W.A.Y.M.A.N***

[Two-line Great Primer Open and Two-line Great Primer Italic Open. From the 1832 Specimen Book.]

full moon, from which circumstance his guests were wont humorously to call themselves ‘Luna-tics.’ In the intervals of the performance the guests refreshed themselves at a sideboard, which was amply furnished; and when it was over, sitting down to a bottle of wine and a decanter of excellent ale of Mr. Caslon’s own brewing, they concluded the evening’s entertainment with a song or two of Purcell’s sung to the harpsichord, or a few catches, and, about twelve, retired.” Woolaston the painter, Charles French the organist of Cripplegate Church, and William de Sautheens the organist of Spitalfields, were among the chief performers: and there is a legend that the great Handel himself did not disdain to take part occasionally in the Caslon concerts.

## Two Centuries of Typefounding

Reverting for a moment to the above-mentioned portrait of William Caslon the First, it may be confidently affirmed that a face revealing so much of mental force combined with artistic temperament prepares us for the statement that William Caslon loved the fine wine of intellectual converse, and that his house was the resort not merely of the "friends of his youth," to whom he was ever charmingly loyal, but also of artists, scholars, and literary men, with whom he loved to discuss the things that matter. All that is known of him bears out the suggestion of his portrait, and confirms the positive assertion of John Nichols ("Anecdotes of Bowyer") that "Mr. Caslon was universally esteemed as a first-rate artist, a tender master, and an honest, friendly, and benevolent man."

In "Lloyd's Evening Post," a neat little eight-page paper, each page ten and seven-eighths inches deep by eight and a half inches wide, there appears, in the first column of the fourth page of the issue for January 22-24, the following announcement under "Deaths": "23, William Caslon, Esq., sen., at Bethnal-green, one of his Majesty's Justices of the Peace for the county of Middlesex. What will render his name immortal was his inimitable skill as a Letter-Founder, which art he brought to the greatest perfection. Before Mr.

ENGLISH, No. 6.

*Quousque tandem abutere, Catilina, patientia nostra? quamdiu nos etiam furor iste tuus eludet? quem ad finem sese effrenata jactabit audacia? nihilne te nocturnum præsidium palatii, nihil urbis vigiliæ, nihil timor populi, nihil consensus bonorum omnium, nihil hic munitissimus habendi senatus locus, nihil horum ora vultusque moverunt? patere tua consilia non sentis? constrictam jam omnium horum conscientia teneri con-*

ABCDEFGHIJKLMN OPQRSTUVWXYZ

ABCDEFGHIKLMNOPQRSTU VWXYZÆ

£ 1234567890

*Quousque tandem abutere, Catilina, patientia nostra? quamdiu nos etiam furor iste tuus eludet? quem ad finem sese effrenata jactabit audacia? nihilne te nocturnum præsidium palatii, nihil urbis vigiliæ, nihil timor populi, nihil consensus bonorum omnium, nihil hic munitissimus habendi senatus locus, nihil horum ora vultusque moverunt? patere tua consilia non sentis? constrictam jam omnium horum conscientia teneri conjurationem tuam*

ABCDEFGHIJKLMN OPQRSTU

O happy is the man who hears  
Instruction's warning voice,  
And who celestial wisdom makes  
His early, only choice.

[From the 1832 Specimen Book.]



## Two Centuries of Typefounding

Caslon's time, the English Printers were obliged to send to Holland for all their types." He died at his house in Hackney Road, Bethnal Green.

If this somewhat daring prophecy had not been fulfilled to the very letter, we should not now be commemorating William Caslon's second century of fame. Earlier in the same column, under date January 21, is

*Two = Line Double Pica Script.*

*Encourage all useful inventions*  
*Fear attends a guilty conscience.*  
*Cash Accounts. Bills of Lading.*  
*Mess<sup>rs</sup> Gillman & Pitt. Bought of.*  
*A B C D E F G H I J K L*  
*£ 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 0*

[From the 1832 Specimen Book.]

recorded the death of "the celebrated Mr. Quin, at Bath, who for many years greatly distinguished himself as an Actor on the English Stage"; so, figuratively speaking, and yet in a sense very literally, did William Caslon, in whose case there was no David Garrick to eclipse him, a feat that even Baskerville could not achieve. It happens that in this same issue there is an announcement that at Drury Lane Theatre on January 23, "Mr. Garrick" would play *Lusignan* in "Zara" before their Majesties, with Mrs. Yates as *Zara*. Lover of the arts that he must have been, William Caslon would certainly avail himself of his opportunities of contrasting the then hotly debated rival methods of Quin and Garrick. Caslon would have infinitely

## Two Centuries of Typefounding

preferred Garrick, who, like the letter-founder, had rescued an art from dire decrepitude.

Like Garrick, who was of Huguenot descent, William Caslon had foreign ancestors, and probably both men, in common with so many other distinguished artists, owed much of their talent to their mixed blood. In the register recording Caslon's baptism, on April 23, 1693—St. George's Day and Shakespeare's—in the parish church of Halesowen, he is entered as "child of George Casselon by Mary his wife." The surname is said to have been originally Caslona, after a town in Andalusia, Spain, whence the child's father came to England in 1688 with William III, in honour of whom, it seems obvious, the infant was named.



[From the 1785 Specimen Book.]



## Chapter VI.

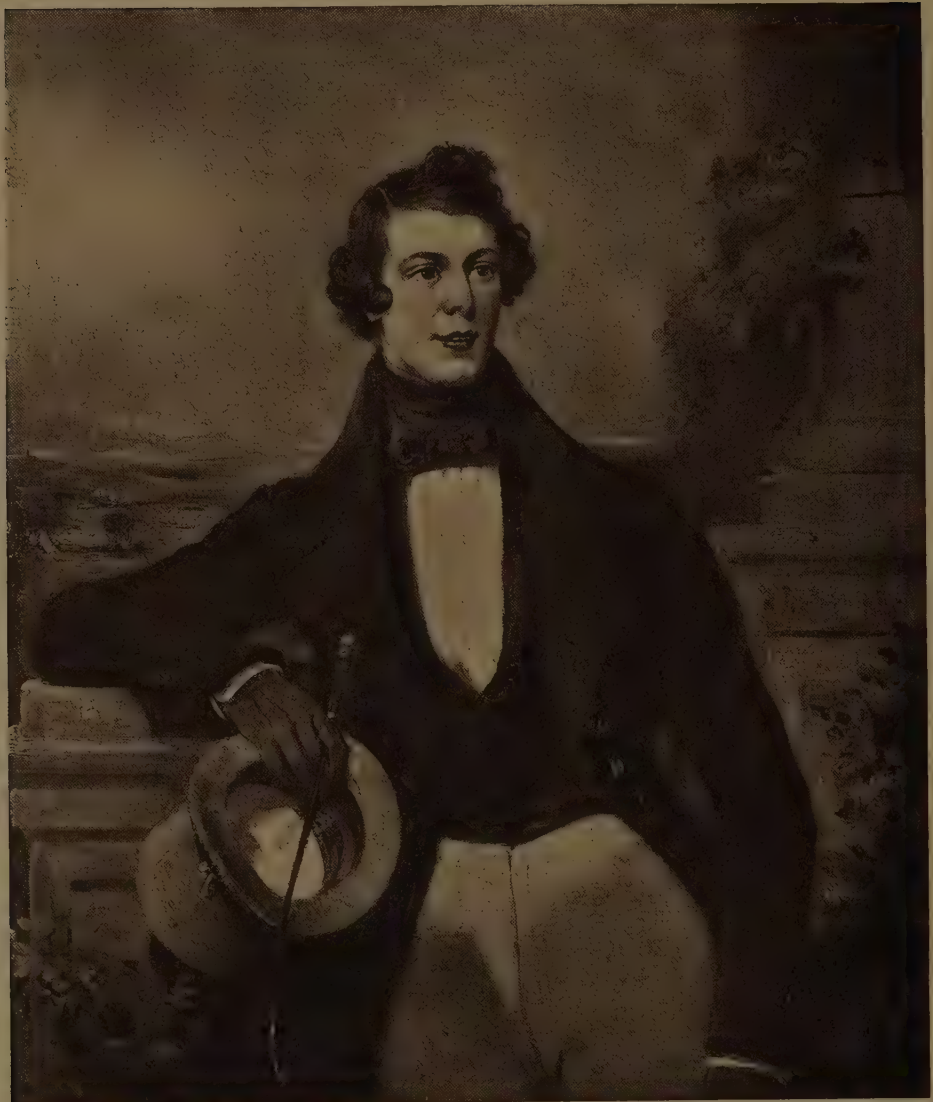
### The Old Order Changeth.

William Caslon the Second and his Successors—"A Lady of Beauty and Understanding"—Two Noble Women—Decay of Taste in Types—The Catherwoods—Martin's Foundry bought—Mr. M. W. Livermore—Mr. H. W. Caslon—Offshoots of The Caslon Foundry.



TIMPERLEY, in his "Dictionary of Printers and Printing," says very little about William Caslon the Second: concerning whom, indeed, there is not much to add to Timperley's terse appreciation that "as an artist he had great merit, though not equal to his father; yet the reputation of the foundry suffered no diminution in his hands." Timperley becomes quite enthusiastic, however, over the superlative character of William the Second's wife and widow. She had been Elizabeth Cartlitch, the only child of an eminent refiner of metals in Foster Lane, Cheapside. She was, quoth Timperley, with a touch of fine eighteenth-century gallantry, "a lady of beauty and understanding, by whom he [William Caslon the Second] had two sons, William and Henry. Mr. Caslon dying without a will, his property became divided in equal proportions between his widow and two sons, but the superintendence devolved upon the elder, William." Of this Great Eliza of type-founding he adds: "Her merit and ability in conducting a capital business during the life of her husband, and afterwards till her son was capable of managing it, was deserving of all praise. In quickness of understanding, and activity of execution, she left few equals among her sex. On the death of her husband, and their eldest son establishing himself in Moorfields, she conducted the business herself, and continued to do so till disabled by an attack of the palsy, which she survived but a few months,

## Two Centuries of Typefounding



Henry William Caslon (V).  
Born 1814. Died 1874.



## Two Centuries of Typefounding

dying October 23, 1795, aged about seventy years." Timperley is a little out in his details. Having been born May 31, 1730, she died in her sixty-sixth year, and the date of her death was Saturday, October 24. A brief contemporary account of her career that appeared in the "Freemasons' Magazine" for March, 1796, is worth citation. When William Caslon the Second died,

"An arduous task now devolved on Mrs. Elizabeth Caslon. The entire management of a very large concern did not, however, come with that weight which it would have borne upon one unaccustomed to the habits of business. Mrs. Caslon had for many years habituated herself to the arrangements of the foundry, so that when the entire care devolved upon her, she manifested powers of mind beyond expectation from a female not then in very early life. In a few years her son, the present Mr. William Caslon, became an active co-partner with his mother: but a misunderstanding between them caused a secession, and they separated their concerns.

"Mrs. Caslon, now in partnership with Mrs. Elizabeth Caslon, the widow of Mr. Henry Caslon, her younger son, continued the business in Chiswell Street with talents uncommon to her sex, and with a close attention extraordinary indeed at her advanced age. . . .

"The urbanity of her manners, and her diligence and activity in the conduct of so extensive a concern, attached to her interest all who had dealings with her: and the steadiness of her friendship rendered her death highly lamented by all who had the happiness of being in the extensive circle of her acquaintance."

It was in the year 1792 that William Caslon the Third gave up his interest in the Chiswell Street foundry to the two splendid Elizabeths—to his mother, who had been Elizabeth Cartlitch, and to his brother Henry's widow, who had been Elizabeth Rowe. Henry (I) had died in 1788, leaving his share in the business to his widow and their only son, Henry (II), who was then but two years old. William Caslon III (born 1754, died 1833) married Elizabeth Wittenoom, who became the mother of William Caslon IV, who was born in 1781 and died in 1869 at Stoke-upon-Trent.

The situation in 1792 is set forth in an announcement in "The London Gazette," Num. 13448, dated "from Tuesday, August 7, to Saturday, August 11" of that year:—

"Notice is hereby given, that the Letter Foundry in Chiswell-street, lately carried on by Mr. William Caslon, will in future be carried on there by Mrs.

## Two Centuries of Typefounding

Elizabeth Caslon, the Widow of the late Mr. William Caslon, for the Benefit of herself and of the Widow and Representatives of her late Son Henry Caslon; and that Mr. William Caslon will also carry on the Business of a Letter Founder, at his new Foundry in Finsbury-place; and it is requested that all Persons having any Demands on Mr. William Caslon, in respect of the Business carried on by him in Chiswell-street, will immediately send an Account of their Demands to him, who will discharge the same.

*"Eliz. Caslon.*

*"Wm. Caslon.*

*"Eliz. Caslon."*

In "The General Evening Post" dated "from Saturday, August 18, to Tuesday, August 21, 1792," the following rather quaint advertisement explained the position more fully:—

### "CHISWELL-STREET LETTER-FOUNDRY.

"THE WIDOW of the late Mr. WILLIAM CASLON, Letter-Founder, in Chiswell-street, Moor-Fields, acquaints the Gentlemen of this Metropolis, of the Three Sister Kingdoms, &c. who have for so many years favoured the Family with their Orders, THAT the Foundry is now conducted by her, for the Benefit of herself, and the Representatives of her late Son, Mr. HENRY CASLON, who, jointly with her, have since Mr. Caslon's Decease possessed Two Thirds of the Foundry, and (having lately purchased of her Son, Mr. William Caslon, the remaining Third) are now in possession of the entire Property of the

### "ORIGINAL CASLON FOUNDRY.

The Estimation in which the Types of this Foundry have been so long held in England, Scotland, and Ireland, in America, in the West-Indies, &c. is such as to have established its Reputation on too firm a basis to stand in need of anything she can say in support of it.

"She has therefore only to add (and she does it with much gratitude for past Favours), That, hoping for the continuance of the patronage her Family has so long enjoyed, she will show her Solicitude to deserve it, by a speedy and punctual Execution of the Orders with which she, and the Parties jointly interested with her, shall in future be favoured, and which her Customers will be pleased to address to her at THE FOUNDRY IN CHISWELL-STREET.

*"ELIZ. CASLON."*

For all her business capacity, Mrs. William Caslon exemplified the curious fact that even the most brilliantly able persons are apt to make bad or ambiguous wills. Her last will and testament was the subject of

## Two Centuries of Typefounding

litigation, and, by order of the Court of Chancery, the Foundry was put up for auction in March, 1799. It was knocked down to Mrs. Henry

FOUR-LINE MINION, No. 1.



No. 2.



No. 3.



No. 4.



No. 5.



No. 6.



### TWO-LINE ENGLISH MASONIC SIGNS.

#### 5s. THE SET.



[From the 1832 Specimen Book.]

that she was, saw clearly enough why sales were falling off. It was because the ever fickle public had grown temporarily tired of the exquisite beauty of the first William Caslon's types. They wanted a change, whether for

Caslon at the ridiculous price of £520. Considering that, seven years previously, a one-third share in the business had been sold for £3,000, the decline is astounding. It may be probably ascribed to one of three possible reasons—(1) depreciation consequent on Mrs. William Caslon's disinclination to cut fresh punches and the natural sequel that a public avid then as now of frequent change fell away from her; (2) to increasingly severe competition; (3) last, and, as a cynic would say, least probable of all three contingencies, contemporary letter-founders may have been too chivalrous to run up the price against a widow. But then, letter-founders are notoriously a chivalrous race!

Mrs. Henry Caslon, keen woman of business



## Two Centuries of Typefounding



[Borders from the 1832 Specimen Book.]



## Two Centuries of Typefounding

better or for worse. Accordingly, Mrs. Henry Caslon commissioned John Isaac Drury to cut a Canon, a Double Pica, and a Pica. The Pica, which was modelled on the style of Bodoni (b. 1740, d. 1813), became very popular. The first Specimen containing the new Romans of Caslon and Catherwood was issued in 1805, Mrs. Caslon having taken into active partnership a distant relation named Nathaniel Catherwood, whose energy and ability helped greatly to restore the prestige and the commercial success of the Foundry. In 1799 Mrs. Henry Caslon had married a doctor of medicine named Strong, who died in 1802, and whom she survived seven years, dying in March, 1809, at Bristol, whither she had gone for the benefit of her health. She was buried in Bristol Cathedral. Nathaniel Catherwood, a man highly esteemed for his honourable and amiable character, died on the 6th of June of the same year, at the early age of forty-five.

A Specimen of Roman letters prepared by Caslon and Catherwood, and published in Stower's "Printer's Grammar," reflects the remarkable vagary of taste that led to the complete abandonment, for well-nigh a century, of the beautiful and world-famous Caslon Old Style in favour of a vastly inferior modern face which may be described with strict justice as inartistic, if not positively and aggressively ugly.

On the deaths of Mrs. Henry Caslon and Nathaniel Catherwood, Henry Caslon II fully sustained the reputation of the firm for enterprise and energy, issuing, about 1812, a new Specimen of Romans and modern Blacks. The title Caslon and Catherwood was retained, and in January, 1814, was fulfilled, or rather, was slightly modified, by the adoption of Mr. John James Catherwood, brother of Nathaniel, as a partner, the style then becoming "Henry Caslon and J. J. Catherwood." This combination was prolific of improvements and additions to the Foundry, Hansard recording of it, in his "Typographia":—

"The additions and varieties made to the stock of the Foundry have been immense. Nothing that perseverance in labour and unsparing effort could effect, either to meet the fashion and evanescent whim of the day, or with the superior view of permanent improvement, has been wanted to keep the concern up to its long-established eminence, and to enable it to rank high among the many able competitors of the present age. The ancient stock can never be equalled, the modern never excelled."

# Two Centuries of Typesetting



[Ornaments from the 1832 Specimen Book.]

## Two Centuries of Typefounding

In the closing year of this partnership (*i.e.*, in 1821) the foundry of Mr. William Martin, of Duke Street, St. James's, was acquired, several good Roman and Oriental letters coming thence to Chiswell Street. In 1821 Mr. J. J. Catherwood withdrew from the partnership, and a share in the business was bestowed on Mr. Martin William Livermore, who had been for many years in the employment of the firm as foreman and afterwards as manager of the mechanical department. Livermore withdrew shortly after the accession of Mr. Henry W. Caslon in 1850, by which time he (Livermore) must have reached a great age. Apparently another foundry was started by Mr. Catherwood, for in John Johnson's "Typographia," published in 1824, the entry "Catherwood, Charles Square, Hoxton," appears in the list of contemporary letter-founders. The other names in the list are:—Austin and Son, Worship Street, Shoreditch; Barton, Stanhope Street, Clare Market; Caslon and Co., Chiswell Street, Finsbury; Figgins, West Street, Smithfield; Fry and Son, Type Street, Chiswell Street; Hughes, Dean Street, Fetter Lane, Holborn; Pouchée, Little Queen Street, Holborn; Thorowgood, Fann Street, Aldersgate Street.

Between 1834 and 1839, Caslons issued several Specimens. The one issued in the latter year bore the title "Caslon, Son, and Livermore, Letter-Founders to Her Majesty's Board of Excise." Mr. Henry Caslon, the senior partner, died May 28, 1850. The "Son" was Mr. Henry William Caslon, who died at Medmenham, July 14, 1874, aged fifty-nine years. Persistent ill-health prevented his enhancing the fortunes of the firm.

Mr. Henry William Caslon being the last of his line, this is an appropriate place in which to summarise the order of succession in the ownership of the Caslon Letter-Foundry. The data are taken from a genealogical table which is among the documents preserved in the firm's archives. The order of succession is as follows:—William Caslon, 1720-1766; William Caslon II, 1766-1788; Mrs. William Caslon, William Caslon III, and Henry Caslon, 1788-1792; Mrs. William Caslon II and Mrs. Henry Caslon, 1792-1795; Mrs. Henry Caslon, 1795-1808; Mrs. Henry Caslon and Catherwood, 1808-1809; Henry Caslon IV and Livermore, 1809-1839; Henry Caslon IV, 1839-1850; Henry W. Caslon, 1850-1873. Here the line of direct succession is broken, and we get: H. W. Caslon and Co. (Thos. W. Smith), 1875-1900; H. W. Caslon and Co.



## Two Centuries of Typefounding



Henry William Caslon (V).  
Born 1814. Died 1874. (See also p. 60.)

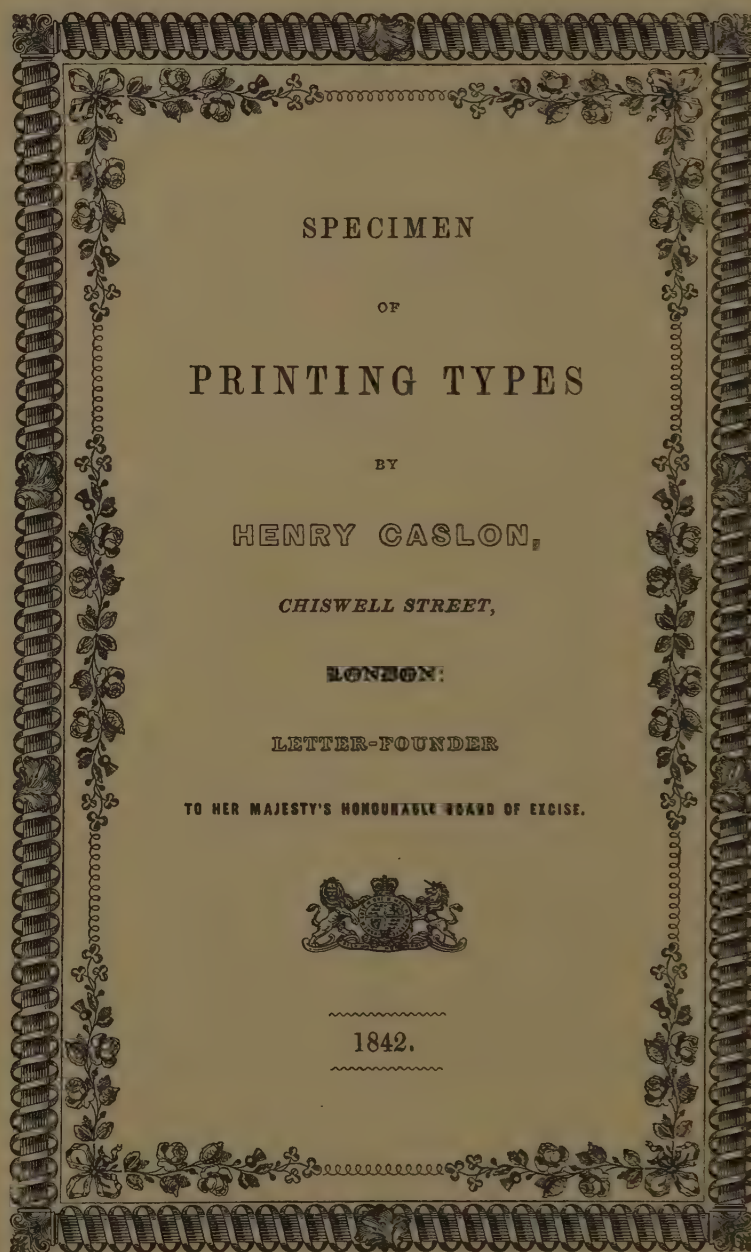


## Two Centuries of Typefounding

Limited (T. W. Smith, A. H. Caslon-Smith, S. H. Caslon-Smith, H. A. Caslon-Smith), 1900. [This table omits the prolific partnership between Henry Caslon and J. J. Catherwood (1814-1821), and it does not give the correct title of Henry Caslon, Son, and Livermore.]

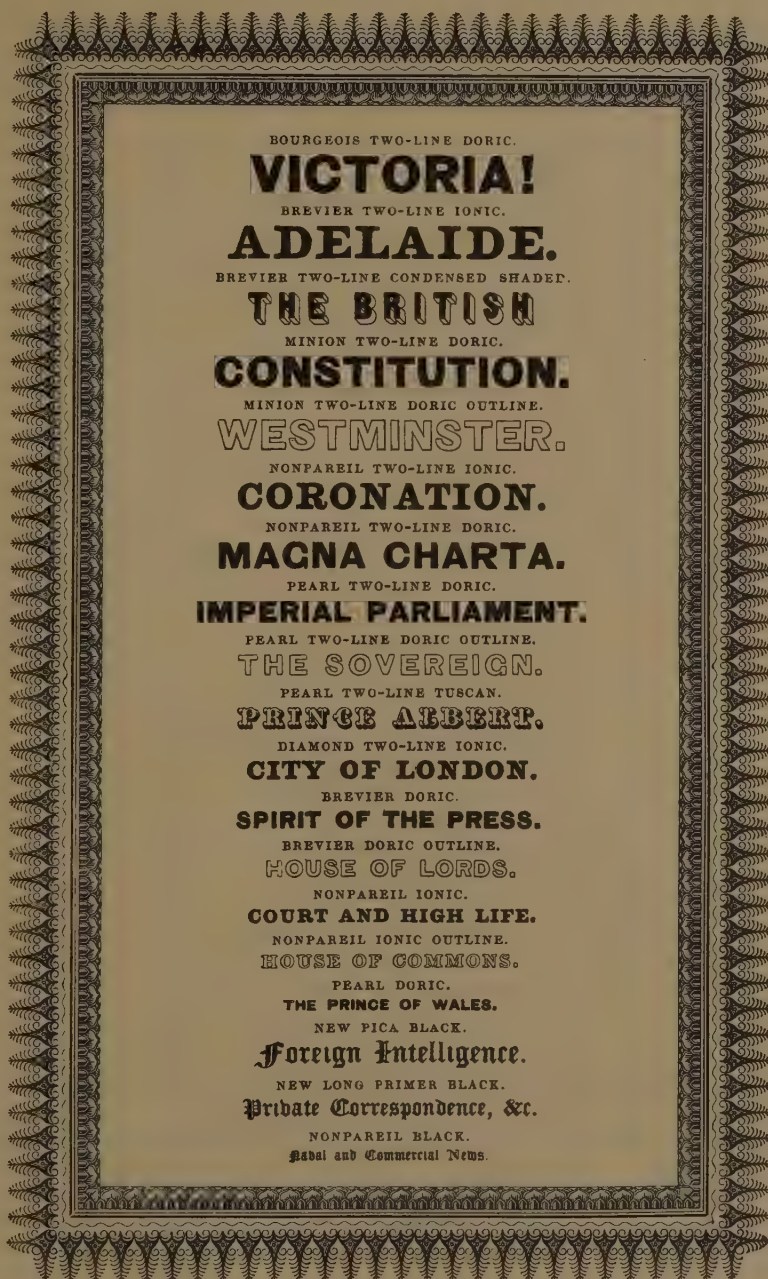
In the same table are traced various offshoots of the Caslon Foundry. They begin with Thomas Cottrell and Joseph Jackson, apprentices of Caslon I, who each started in business for himself, and who were for a time in partnership. From Cottrell (1757-1785) the line of descent is as follows: Robert Thorne, 1785-1820; William Thorowgood, 1820-1838; Thorowgood and Besley, 1838-1849; R. Besley and Co. (Fox), 1849-1861; Reed and Fox, 1861-1877; Sir Charles Reed and Sons, 1877-1896. Of collateral descent were: Fry and Pine, 1764-1770; Fry and Moore, 1770-1776; J. Fry and Co., 1776-1794; Fry and Steele, 1794-1828. Joseph Jackson's foundry lasted from 1763 to 1792. In succession to him came William Caslon III, 1792-1803; Caslon and Son, 1803-1807; William Caslon IV, 1807-1819; Blake, Garnett and Co., 1819-1830; Blake and Stephenson, 1830-1841; Stephenson, Blake and Co., 1841. Vincent Figgins, an apprentice to Joseph Jackson, started his foundry in 1792. From 1844 onwards, the Figgins firm bore the title Vincent and James Figgins. From these data it will be seen that all the important letter-foundries in London and at least one country firm are in direct or collateral descent from the Foundry in Chiswell Street, and the genealogy fully confirms the title of William Caslon the First as The Father of English Typefounding.

# Two Centuries of Typefounding



[Title Page of 1842 Specimen Book.]

# Two Centuries of Typefounding



# Two Centuries of Typefounding

CHISWELL STREET, London, October, 1838.

## PRICES OF PRINTING TYPES, &c.

	s.	d.
Twelve-Line Pica and larger .....	1	0 per lb.
Eleven-Line Pica to Six-Line Pica .....	1	2
Five-Line Pica to Two-Line Pica .....	1	6
Double Pica to Great Primer .....	1	9

	LETTER, &c.		LARGE	AVERAGE	
	s.	d.	QUADRATS.	s.	d.
English .....	1	11	1	0	10 per lb.
Pica .....	2	0	1	0	11
Small Pica .....	2	3	1	2	2
Long Primer .....	2	6	1	2	4
Bourgeois .....	3	2	1	6	0
Brevier .....	3	4	1	8	2
Minion .....	4	3	2	0	0
Nonpareil .....	5	10	2	6	6
Ruby .....	6	9	2	9	3
Pearl .....	7	0	3	0	6
Diamond .....					12
Two-Line Letters to Bourgeois, and larger .....					2
Brevier .....					3
Minion .....					3
Nonpareil .....					4
Pearl .....					4
Diamond .....					5

Open and Fancy Two-Line Letters one half more than Plain  
Antiques and Large Condensed at Letter Price.

### SCRIPTS—COMPLETE FOUNTS.

Four-Line Pica .....	4	0 per lb.
Two-Line Double Pica .....	4	6
Two-Line English to Great Primer .....	5	0
English .....	6	0
Metal Furniture .....	0	10 per lb.
Quotations and Justifiers .....	1	0
Space Rules .....	6	6
Space Lines 4 to Pica .....	1	0
5 to Pica .....	1	2
6 to Pica .....	1	4
7 to Pica .....	1	8
8 to Pica .....	2	0

Space Lines may be had as thin as 14 to Pica.

*Black, German, Greek, and Signs, one half more than Letter Price.*

Flowers, &c. Great Primer and larger, 2s. 8d. per lb.; smaller, same as Black, &c.

Brass Rules, Cases, Chases, Printing Ink, Reglet, &c. on moderate Terms, and of the best Quality.

A weight of Old Types, equal to that of the New, taken in exchange at 6d. per lb. if delivered on or before the end of the current year.—4 lb. per hundred deducted for Tret.

Twelve Months' running Credit; or Ten *per Cent.* Discount for Ready Money.

[Price List from the 1842 Specimen Book.]





## Chapter VII.

Mr. Thomas W. Smith.

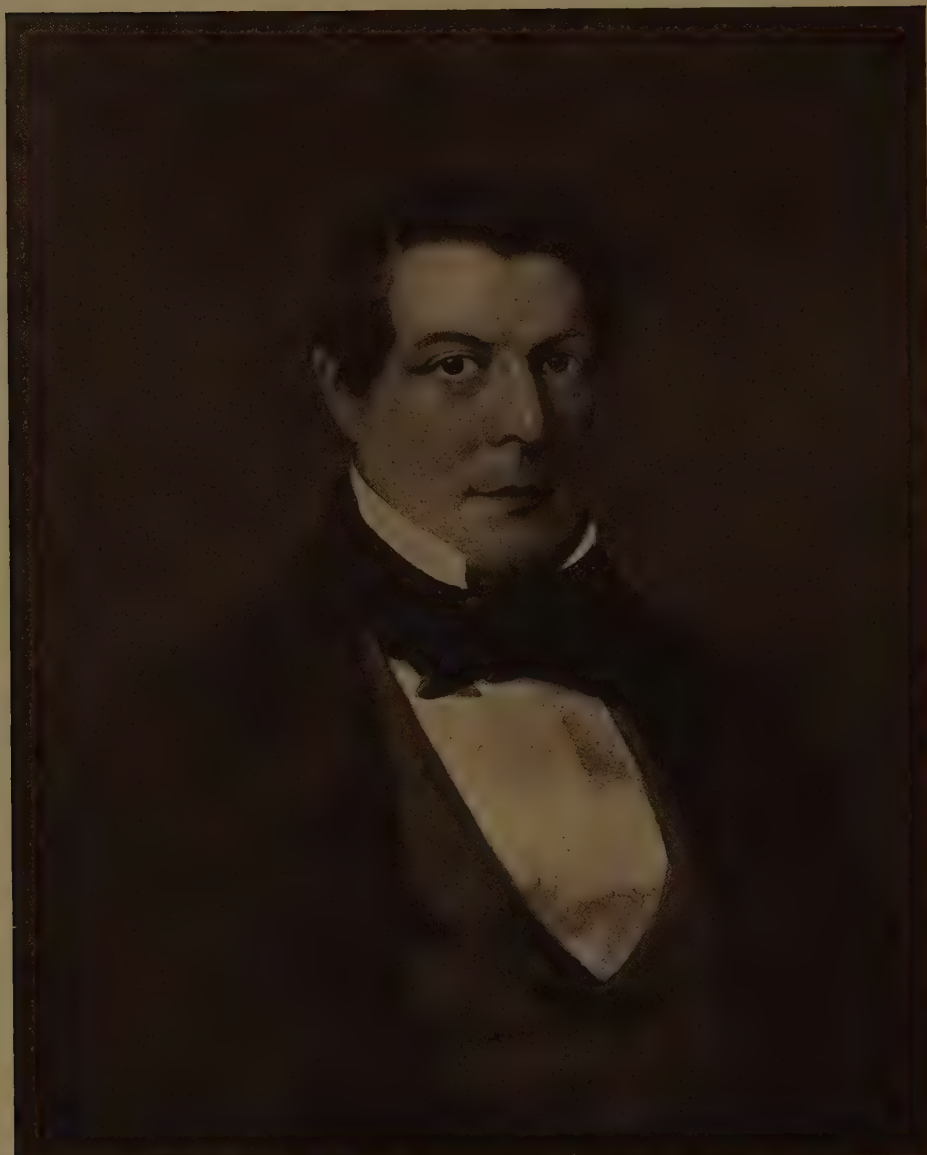
Apprenticed to a Printer—His Love of Thoroughness—A “Turnover at Case”—Comes to London—Clerk to Messrs. Stephenson & Blake—Starts at the Caslon Foundry—Success as Traveller—A Caslon Crisis—Establishes London Branch for Stephenson & Blake—Manager at Chiswell Street—Admitted to Partnership—Becomes Sole Proprietor—Takes his Sons into Partnership—He Passes Away.



MR. Thomas White Smith, who may be justly said to have given the Caslon Foundry a new lease of life, was born at Tavistock, Devon, in 1835. He was the son of a Wesleyan minister, who, when Thomas was eight years old, was stationed at Newport, Isle of Wight, whence the boy was sent at that tender age to the school for preachers' sons which John Wesley had founded at Kingswood, near Bristol. After six years' schooling, followed by a short period of study at home, Thomas was apprenticed to a printer at the aforementioned Newport. Here, Mr. Smith has recorded in an interesting autobiography printed for private circulation, “pleasure came first and business afterwards”: but the hours were long—from six o'clock in the morning until eight at night, with half an hour for breakfast, an hour for dinner, and half an hour for tea. “It was my good fortune, however,” he continues, “to be well taught my trade, and my aim was invariably to do what I had to do as well as possible, not as speedily as possible as the rule is nowadays: the result being that I acquired an intense dislike to slopwork and a corresponding taste for achieving perfection in the art as nearly as the materials at my command allowed—a taste which has been of immense benefit to me throughout my life.”

The minister having been transferred to Guernsey, the apprentice

## Two Centuries of Typefounding



Henry William Caslon (V).  
Born 1814. Died 1874. (See also pages 60 and 68.)

## Two Centuries of Typefounding

became a "turnover" to the proprietor of a newspaper there—"The Comet." He brought thence to London the certificate that "The bearer is a swift and clean compositor." Before coming to London, however, the youth worked for a short time in Tiverton, whither his father went on circuit in 1853. It was on January 24th, 1854, that the young printer came to London, where he completed his term of apprenticeship in the office of Mr. Thomas Sercombe—or, rather, in that of Messrs. Sercombe and Jack, for that title had been assumed before young Smith came out of his time.

Mr. Sercombe "had compassion on the lonely youth," and had him home to dinner every Sunday. On one such occasion the youth met Mr. H. B. Smith, London representative of the firm of Messrs. Stephenson, Blake & Co., the Sheffield firm of letter-founders. On the very day that Thomas came out of his time, Mr. H. B. Smith engaged him to serve as a clerk in the counting-house of Messrs. Stephenson & Blake, with a view to his becoming ultimately one of their travelling representatives. "It is rather a curious coincidence," Mr. Thomas W. Smith remarks, "that during the last year of my apprenticeship I wrought at the same frame with the late Mr. Shanks, of the typefounding firm in Red Lion Square. I have wondered whether my engagement in a type-foundry led my fellow-worker to turn his thoughts in the same direction." Nothing is more probable.

Young Mr. Thomas Smith was thought to be too shy to make a successful traveller, and he therefore sought an engagement at the Caslon Foundry, which he entered on February 23rd, 1857. "At that time," he writes, "the only other occupants of the counting-house besides the principals (Messrs. H. W. Caslon and George Fagg) were the good old type-founder and kindly Scotsman Alexander Wilson and a lad." Mr. Wilson "was a gentleman of superior education and attainments, of most amiable disposition, and possessed of a never-failing fund of quaint humour and story. He was a good mathematician, . . . a fine chess-player, and a great lover of poetry. . . . Association with a gentleman of his attainments and character," Mr. Smith acknowledges, with characteristic modesty and gratitude, "did much to form in myself tastes which have been a source of pleasure through life." But if the seed had fallen on stony ground?

In August, 1860, Mr. Smith was appointed to a position on the outdoor staff of the Caslon Foundry, and began at Leeds his remarkably successful

## Two Centuries of Typefounding

career as a traveller. "For about five years," he records, "I much enjoyed the roaming life which fell to my lot, working the whole of the North of England, and Scotland as far north as Inverness, and subsequently the principal towns of Ireland." He brought much business to the firm, but his energy was brought to naught by a grave crisis that occurred—the most serious in its history. It is best described in Mr. Smith's candid and

UNION PLACE

FINSBURY

SURREY GARDENS.

REGENT'S PARK

THE LIVERPOOL RAILWAY

UNEXAMPLED SPEED

[Two-line Double Pica and English Two-line Ornamental Nos. 1 and 2. From the 1842 Specimen Book.]

impartial account of it: "Mr. Henry Caslon, the last of the name, was a man of generous impulse, but of little wisdom in business matters. He was more fitted to fill the rôle of a gentleman of the world, unfettered by any necessity to consider ways and means, than to own and manage successfully a type-foundry, however old and well established. The natural consequence was that the income derived from the business did not stand the demands which he made upon it, and an ill-advised attempt being made to reduce the wages of some of the workmen, a strike of those of one department of manufacture took place, followed by a lockout of all the rest. This lamentable occurrence, which led to almost total suspension of the



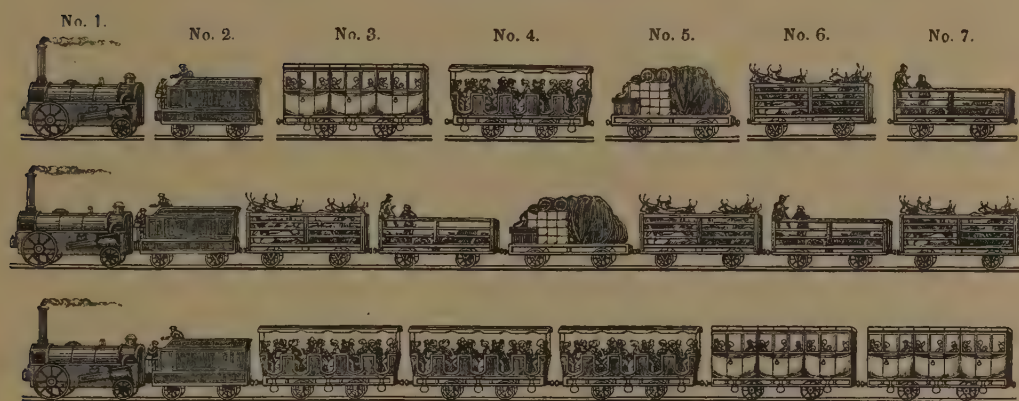
## Two Centuries of Typefounding

business for eight months of the year 1865, nearly ruined it. Alexander Wilson and his brother Patrick, as well as myself, were no longer occupied in Chiswell Street, and whilst my old Scots friends were able to retire on a small competence left them by a distant relative, I had to seek employment elsewhere."

Mr. Thomas W. Smith's suggestion to Messrs. Stephenson, Blake & Co. of Sheffield, to open a London agency was adopted, and for eight years

### RAILWAY CARRIAGES.

2s. 6d. each, or 15s. the set.



[From the 1842 Specimen Book.]

he was very successful in conducting the London branch of that eminent firm of typefounders.

In 1872 he was invited to undertake the management of the historic Chiswell Street Foundry. Mr. Henry W. Caslon was at that time in acute ill-health, and it may well be supposed that the business itself was by no means in a robust condition. Mr. Caslon died in 1874 at Medmenham, where his charming riverside house, embowered in roses, and with jasmine and clematis climbing its veranda, had brought much sweet solace to his declining days. Mr. Henry W. Caslon was of striking appearance and attractive manners. His distinguished friend Mr. Marcus Stone, R.A., used to say that the retired letter-founder would make up splendidly as a Louis XV courtier. Mr. Smith thought this description

## Two Centuries of Typefounding



Thomas White Smith.  
Born 1835. Died 1907.

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remarkably apt, and he supplemented it with this terse but extremely vivid character sketch :

“ Mr. Caslon, having spent many years of his life in France, was a master of the French language, which he spoke in a nearly treble voice. This, combined with his clean-shaven, somewhat massive face, piercing dark eyes, and a most courteous yet indefinitely commanding manner, stamped him as a man of commanding presence.”

In taking over the management of the Caslon Foundry at so critical a moment in its history, Mr. Smith was, as he fully realised, faced with a very formidable work of reconstruction.

“ I look back with astonishment,” he writes, “ upon the first years of my efforts to reorganise, administrate, and systematise the business, which was so deeply stuck in the ruts of old custom and routine. It was only by the exercise of the utmost tact that I could introduce reforms in a factory whose foremen, and many of the best workmen, had been in it since childhood. But, slowly and surely, the work went on, and year by year showed improvements, not only in the internal arrangements and working of the foundry, but in the amount of business done. Whilst other founders had been producing new faces for book-letter and display type, nothing had been done by Mr. Caslon for some years, the consequence being that not the least of my tasks was that of working up arrears of production and rescuing our Specimen Book from the miserably stale and degraded state to which it had fallen.”

It was not very long before Mr. Smith was able to give substantial proofs of his ability to grapple with the situation, as the following letter from Mr. Henry W. Caslon bears eloquent testimony:—

“ The Rosery, Medmenham, July 3rd, 1874.

“ My dear T.W.S.,—

“ I was very pleased to see your sales for June so very good. Verily the old House is itself again under your able guidance. I can assure you it is a great comfort to me to know that I am succeeded by a gentleman, and one who so ably fills the position so long held by the Caslons. May you have many prosperous and happy years, and, when past work, resign the ‘ ribbons ’ to a chip of your worthy self.”

Some few years before his death, Mr. Caslon had dissolved partnership with a Mr. Fagg, and had thereby become sole proprietor of the Foundry. In retiring, Mr. Caslon entered into an arrangement with his lawyer and friend, Mr. C. J. Curtis, who, in consideration of a deed of assignment and a

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will leaving one half of Mr. Caslon's possessions to Mr. Curtis and the other half to Mrs. Cookesley (Mr. Caslon's sister), undertook to pay Mr. Caslon a life-annuity. When, in 1874, Mr. Henry W. Caslon died, Mr. Thos. W. Smith was taken in to partnership with Mr. Curtis and Mrs. Cookesley. On the death of Mrs. Cookesley, her share in the business was purchased by Mr. Smith and Mr. C. C. Flindell, one of the senior representatives of the Foundry, the firm then being composed of Messrs. Curtis, Smith, and Flindell, trading under the style of H. W. Caslon and Co. On the death of Mr. Curtis (in 1880), his share was bought by Messrs. Smith and Flindell. In 1895 Mr. Flindell died, and then Mr. Thomas White Smith realised his long-cherished ambition of becoming sole proprietor of the historic Foundry in Chiswell Street. This fulfilment of his heart's desire is one of the rare instances of poetic justice in real life; for it was his energy, his ability, his judgment and foresight, his knowledge and taste in typography, that enabled him to infuse new life and spirit into the grand old firm, of which, indeed, he may be said to have been the second founder.

He did not care to be solitary on the pinnacle to which he had climbed.

PICA, No. 8.

Quousque tandem abutere, atilina, patientia nostra? quamdiu nos etiam furor iste tuus eludet? quem ad finem sese effrenata jactabit audacia? nihilne te nocturnum præsidium palatii, nihil urbis vigiliæ, nihil timor populi, nihil consensus bonorum omnium, nihil hic munitissimus habendi senatus locus, nihil horum ora vultusque moverunt? patere tua consilia non sentis? constrictam jam omnium horum conscientia teneri conjurationem tuam non vides? quid proxima, ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZÆ

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZÆ

£ 1234567890

Quousque tandem abutere, Catilina, patientia nostra? quamdiu nos etiam furor iste tuus eludet? quem ad finem sese effrenata jactabit audacia? nihilne te nocturnum præsidium palatii, nihil urbis vigiliæ, nihil timor populi, nihil consensus bonorum omnium, nihil hic munitissimus habendi senatus locus, nihil horum ora vultusque moverunt? patere tua consilia non sentis? constrictam jam omnium horum conscientia teneri conjurationem tuam non vides? quid proxima, quid superiore nocte egeris, ubi fueris, ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ

O ye! whom Science chose to guide  
Her unpolluted stream along,  
Adorn with flowers its cultur'd side,  
And to its taste allure the young  
O say, what language can reveal  
Th' exalted pleasures you must feel,  
When, fir'd by you, the youthful breast  
Disdains to court inglorious rest.

[From the 1842 Specimen Book.]



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In 1896 he took into partnership his three sons, Albert, Sydney, and Harold. He had been careful to put all three through a course of training as practical printers. At the same time, "feeling naturally," as he said, "regret that the honoured and historical name of Caslon should die out, not a single individual in the wide world bearing that name," he recommended his sons to take the necessary legal steps to add the name Caslon as a prefix to their own. Their name then became Caslon-Smith, which by subsequent deed-poll they changed to Caslon.

Thomas White Smith passed away at Lake View, Woodberry Down, North London, on February 5th, 1907—seven years after his withdrawal from active participation in the business—and was buried at Highgate Cemetery. Twice he had journeyed round the world, and at every stage of the journey he made firm friends. By none was he more sincerely mourned than by the workers who had come to him as boys and had grown grey in his service. All who had business relations with him knew him for the soul of honour. Thus much had to be said in mere justice to a true-hearted man; but further eulogy would here be out of place. For those who knew and loved him it is needless.



[From the 1785 Specimen Book.]

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[Ornaments from the 1842 Specimen Book; some possibly engraved by Bewick, who, however, died in 1828.]



## Chapter VIII.

### Some Modern Developments.

Internal Reforms in the Printing Office—Some Famous Type-Faces of Recent Times—Type-Casting by Machinery—Sir Henry Bessemer—Caxton Celebration Exhibition marks a New Era—Linotype, Monotype, Intertype—Old Face Revival—Mr. Thomas W. Smith Advocates the Point System—Its Inventors—Epilogue.



IN the domain of letter-founding much history has been made since the death of Mr. Thomas W. Smith, the regenerator of the House of Caslon, but as yet it cannot be seen in true historical perspective. It is obviously impossible for the producers of this book to review with strict judicial detachment those recent events in which they have taken an active share, and on which they cannot pretend to speak impartially. When Mr. Thomas W. Smith became (in 1895) head of the ancient and renowned House in Chiswell Street, he enlarged the scope and multiplied the activities of the firm by manufacturing and selling many kinds of machinery, appliances, and supplies. At the large new factory in Hackney Wick (built in 1900), not only was letter-founding pursued with unprecedented vigour and success, but the business in printers' joinery, materials, appliances and machinery was developed to first-class magnitude and importance, every want of the printer being met with a degree of ingenuity beyond all previous experience. Mr. Smith and his sons introduced many labour-saving and space-economising devices, which, collectively, transformed completely the interior of the printing office. More especially, of course, it altered the aspect of the composing-room, which until then had been encumbered with equipment that was almost incredibly antiquated and clumsy. Neat, compact, and dust-proof racks, cabinets, frames, and



# Caslon Old Face

(Cast in Sixteen Sizes on Point Bodies)

## Caslon Old Black

Old Fashioned Borders and Ornaments,  
Head and Tail-Pieces  
Initials, &c.



## H. W. Caslon & Co. Ltd.

82 & 83 Chiswell Street, London, E.C.

11 New Brown Street, Manchester



## Two Centuries of Typefounding

cases, and ingenious improvements in almost every detail of equipment, were accompanied by corresponding advancement in the art, science, and methods of letter-founding. Since the advent of Mr. Thomas W. Smith to power many beautiful and world-renowned faces have been introduced—Jenson, De Vinne, Carlton, and, most phenomenally successful of all, Cheltenham, have been added to the resources of the British printer; and the enormous demand for these faces would have been very inadequately met by the slow process of hand casting. Fortunately, the invention of type-casting machinery had long preceded these popular lines. Type-casting by machinery was, as long ago as 1838, the subject of a patent taken out by Sir Henry Bessemer, the prolific inventor to whose versatile genius we owe not only the world-renowned Bessemer process of steel manufacture, but also, among a hundred minor discoveries, the Bessemer bronze powder that provided a new resource for printers. Sir Henry was a god-child of Henry Caslon, for whom Bessemer's father had worked as a punch-cutter, an art he had followed under Firmin-Didot in Paris. Many other descriptions of machinery have been invented or perfected by the House of Caslon, than whose factory there is none better equipped, while no firm is more alert for the prompt adoption of the latest improvements. Prominent among the several clever mechanics whose services have been of value to the firm was R. J. Chitson, whose ingenuity in effecting improvements in letter-founding plant and machinery was boundless. Mr. Chitson has reached a patriarchal age, and is the head of a truly patriarchal family. There have existed simultaneously five generations of Chitsons, and three generations are now (1920) represented at the Caslon Letter-Foundry.

The Caxton Celebration Exhibition, held at South Kensington in the summer of 1877, heralded a new era in printing—an era that has proved more progressive, and more prolific of inventions, than the whole period of printing history that preceded it. Within the next decade printing underwent a complete change in almost every aspect. There was greatly increased rapidity in all departments. The rotary printing machine was the harbinger of a general demand for acceleration. Contemporaneously came some fairly successful type-setting machines, such as the Thorne, the Hattersley, and the "Empire," and ultimately these were superseded by the Linotype slug-caster and the Monotype machine, the latter a combination of type-



# CASLON

## *OLD FACE*

ROMAN & *ITALIC*.

*Engraved in the Early Part  
of the 18th Century  
by  
William Caslon.*



CAST IN SIXTEEN SIZES BY

## H. W. CASLON & Co. LTD.

CHISWELL STREET, LONDON, E.C.



## Two Centuries of Typefounding

casting and type-setting. There came also the very rapid and efficient slug-casting machine known as the Intertype, introduced into England by Messrs. H. W. Caslon & Co. in 1913. Strange to tell, the basic principle of the Linotype, that in which it differs fundamentally from a type-setting machine—the casting of a “line o’ type” from matrices which are set up when the keyboard is operated—was suggested by a letter-founder, none other than Mr. Thomas W. Smith, who early took out a patent embodying it. His rights were bought for a handsome sum by the then proprietors of the machine. Speed was also the object in introducing the photo-mechanical process of engraving, which, early in the eighteen-eighties, very rapidly superseded the incomparably slower method of engraving on wood.

Two other tit-bits of typographical history with which Mr. Smith was closely associated were the revival of the famous Caslon Old Face type, and the introduction of the Point System into Britain.

Caslon Old Face was rescued from mere oblivion in 1843, while Mr. H. Caslon IV was at the head of the Chiswell Street Foundry, but it was during the control of Mr. Thomas Smith that it became the most widely esteemed type of all time. The story of its revival at the request of Mr. Whittingham of the Chiswick Press, who wanted a type-face that by its style should correspond to the period of a novel he was about to print—“*The Diary of Lady Willoughby*”—is too well known to justify repetition. Mr. Whittingham probably got his idea from an edition of one of the classic authors that had been printed a short while previously, from type cast from the old matrices; but it was the *Diary* that really and effectively started “O.F.” on its new career of usefulness and popularity. John Baskerville, who was nearly the first of those daring spirits who thought that Caslon O.F. could be improved; Bodoni, who imagined he could design a better type by thickening the heavy lines and sharpening the light ones, thus producing a rather violent contrast; and Firmin-Didot, who held much the same empirical views as Bodoni, were between them responsible for the decadence represented by the Modern Face that is still so largely in use for newspaper production, but is much less seldom employed for bookwork and display. Even “Caslon’s Circular,” of which the first number appeared in January, 1875, was printed in the Modern Face type, and it was not until July, 1880, that the adoption of O.F. letterpress for the “Circular” demonstrated that the King of Types





## I N T R O D U C T O R Y



HIS Specimen Book is issued to show the completeness of Caslon Old Face, Old Face Italic & Old Black, together with the Old-fashioned Borders, Initials, Head and Tail Pieces, for the production of the very Highest Class of Book, Magazine, and Display Printing.

### Caslon Old Face Series

These beautiful founts were engraved by the founder of our firm, WILLIAM CASLON, nearly two centuries ago, and at the present moment are enjoying an immense popularity throughout the English-speaking World.



## Two Centuries of Typefounding

had come to its own again. Mr. Andrew W. Tuer, of Leadenhall Street, and Messrs. Cassell were in the van in this Restoration.

For Mr. Thomas W. Smith it may be justly claimed that he certainly did more than any other man to establish the Point System in this country. From 1886 to 1903, he repeatedly and almost incessantly urged printers to adopt Point measurements. He persistently harped on the theme, especially in the pages of the "Circular," which under his skilful editorship became an effectual missionary of the gospel of good printing, and a pioneer of many valuable reforms. The general adoption of the Point System in America, and its continual advocacy in the trade press and by teachers at the technical institutes like the Saint Bride Foundation Printing School, which had been opened in October, 1894, and the constant commendation of "Point" in "The British Printer," and by eminent printers like Mr. Geo. W. Jones, whose powerful personal influence on every detail of typography was greatly extended through his ownership of the splendidly produced publication "The Printing World"—forces like these were irresistible. British printers, reputedly the most conservative of human beings, at length became zealous converts to the Point System, and Messrs. H. W. Caslon and Co. co-operated energetically with other founders, British and American, in giving full effect to this great reform.

There was no novelty in the idea. Standard sizes for type-depths—in effect, a Point System—had been adopted by Fournier in 1737, and he published an account of his system in 1742, and again in his "Manuel Typographique" (Paris, 1764). In the Chiswell Street archives, wherein are preserved many such treasures, there is a pamphlet, "published by and for Bower, Brothers, Type Founders," in 1841 at Sheffield, entitled "Proposals for Establishing a Graduated Scale of Sizes for the Bodies of Printing Types, and Fixing their Height to Paper; based upon Pica as the Common Standard, and Referable to the English Inch." This remarkable pamphlet is now very rare, but a copy of it can be seen in the technical library at the Saint Bride Foundation Institute, London. For an interesting observation on the virtual identity of the Didot system with that adopted quite independently of it by the American Type Founders Company, we are indebted to Mr. Henry L. Bullen, Librarian of the Typographic Library and Museum of the American Type Founders Company. Writing to us on June 10, 1913,

8 A, 20 a.

72-point Old Face.

45 lbs.

REIGNS  
Distributed

8 A, 20 a.

60-point Old Face.

35 lbs.

HEROISM  
Noble Actions

8 A, 20 a.

48-point Old Face.

24 lbs.

EDINBURGH  
Municipal Servants  
October, 2648

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Mr. Bullen relates how "the [Fournier] system was adopted in France and the Netherlands, how variations occurred, and how F. A. Didot, born 1730, died 1804, brought it back to a systematic base, as may be read in Beaudoire's 'Le Point Typographique et le Congrès d'Anvers' (Paris, 1891). Beaudoire is a typefounder. In 1843 Bower Brothers, of Sheffield, published an account of a Point System quite different from the French. It does not seem to have been adopted. It is singular that Nelson C. Hawks, who persuaded Marder, Luse & Company to adopt the Point System, should have hit on precisely the same system as Fournier's, using one-twelfth of MacKellar's Pica as a base for his point. I have shown him Fournier's book, and he assures me that he never heard of Fournier or his system. Mr. Hawks is an estimable man, and I believe that he worked out his system independently. As to Point-set, L. B. Benton introduced the principle though not the name in the early eighties of last century, under the name of self-spacing types, and took out a patent in 1883. Haller-Goldschach and Barnhart Brothers & Spindler are followers of Benton, several of whose units were actually based on the Point. He advertised it as 'point system both ways,' and made display types on Point-set principles." The history of the Point System could not be given more succinctly.

Scientific costing was another important reform which was advocated in the "Caslon Circular" with unflagging perseverance and ultimate success. In its pages Mr. W. W. Fox elaborated a costing system that printers have found extremely valuable as a firm basis for fair charges.

During the great European War Messrs. H. W. Caslon & Co.'s extensive factories and foundry at Hackney Wick, which had been opened in 1900, were, of course, engaged on munition work; and it may here be mentioned that more than seventy Caslonites joined His Majesty's Forces. This number included seven Caslons, and among those who made the great sacrifice was Thomas White Caslon, R.F.A., son of Mr. Albert H. Caslon. The other Caslons who served with the Forces were—Harold A., H.A.C.; Christian A., R.F.A.; Ralph S., R.F.A.; Clifford, Lieutenant, R.N. (H.M.S. "Malaya"); Daniel H., R.N. (H.M.S. "Hood"); and Eric W., Norfolk Regiment. In November, 1920, Mr. Christian A. Caslon and Mr. Ralph Sydney Caslon were appointed directors of the firm of Messrs. H. W. Caslon & Co., Ltd.





*Thomae Kempis. Imitatione Christi*

eximius, cui statas quotidie preces solitus erat persolvere. Verum quia instabilis et nutabunda est puerilis pietas, coepit et in eo laxioribus velis pia haec consuetudo navigare

**P**EDETENTIM igituri solitas orationes atques suffragia primo ad unum diem dehinc ad duos aut tres, demum ad quatuor, tandem ad integram septimanam, neglexit; et (quod dolendum) est postremo universa postposuit. QUOD dum ageret visum est sibi in visione nocturna quasi staret atrio magistri *Florentii*: ubi, dum simul cum alis scholaribus qui simul conflabant ad audiendum divinum verbum, avidas aures ad ea quae dicerentur, inclinaret, conspexit in nubibus coeli desuper venie

## Epilogue.



"CHISWELL" is believed to be a corruption of "Archer's Well," even as "Tooley Street" is a corruption of "St. Olave Street." For a hundred and ninety years the historical home of the Caslon Letter-Foundry at 22 and 23, Chiswell Street, had been held on lease from the Honourable Artillery Company, originally a company of archers, on whose ground it stood: but in 1911 Messrs. Caslon's great Specimen Book of more than 800 pages was issued from the new premises that had been specially built for them on the other side of the same street. From William Caslon the First's small beginning at Helmet Row two hundred years ago has sprung a letter-foundry that is certainly second to none in the magnitude of its operations, and that aims earnestly and unceasingly at the same pre-eminence in the quality of its products. It has agencies not only in Manchester and elsewhere in these Islands, but also in South America, in the Indian Empire, in all the British Overseas Dominions, and in Paris, where, at the beginning of the third century of its existence, it is about to establish a foundry for the production of type on the Didot System of Points.

From the walls of the Chiswell Street Letter-Foundry there gaze down the portraits of the men and women who have built up the reputation of the House of Caslon.

Collectively they represent nearly two centuries of honourable history.

Would it not be passing strange if their presence were not a perpetual incentive to the workers of to-day?

For the selection and arrangement of the illustrations in this book, for its planning, and for the beauty of its production, cordial acknowledgments are due to Mr. George W. Jones, one of the most eminent of living typographers. It will be understood that many of the examples are shown less for their beauty than for their historical interest. The text has been written by John Findlay McRae, mainly from authentic documents supplied by H. W. Caslon & Co. Ltd., A.D. 1920.















